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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 4 June 2012

Lundi 4 juin 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 June 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 juin 2012

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to say how proud I am that my nephew, Andrew Hutton, is one of the legislative pages joining us today. In fact, today he is captain of the legislative pages—got the big C on his chest. We're joined in the gallery by his proud family: parents Sharon and James Hutton, sister Meredith Hutton, brother Ben Hutton, and proud grandparents Andy and Doris Weishar. It's good to see you out today.

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I'd like to welcome to the House my family members: my partner's mother, Mary Louise Bozzo; his aunt and uncle Cathy and Charlie Bozzo; and his cousins Jennifer and Alessandro Bozzo.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm really pleased to honour some special friends who have come all the way from Fort Erie to be with us today, the Demizio family. I'm pleased to introduce Dean Demizio, who also is the president of the Fort Erie Chamber of Commerce; his wife, Peggy; his son Gabriel; and his daughter Cloey. It's a pleasure to have them here. I've explained to them how professional we are in the House and how quiet we'll be during question period. They're really excited to listen to it.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I ask all members to help me welcome the students from Holy Trinity High School in Bradford, who are currently on the grand staircase waiting for me to come there. Please help me welcome them to the chamber.

Mr. Michael Mantha: In the Legislature today I have students from Central Manitoulin Public School who will be touring and will be joining us shortly. Please welcome them.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise today to welcome the McColeman family from Oakville. We have Scott, Linda, their children Meghan and Marie, and they've joined us in the east gallery, Speaker.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to welcome the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance to Queen's Park. In the gallery today is Rejean Picard, chair of TOGA; Don Taylor, chair of the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers; Gerard Schouwenaar, chair of Flowers Canada; and Jan VanderHout. I'd like to also invite all the members of the

Legislature to attend their lunch reception after question period in room 230.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to welcome to the House today Randy Colbert and Sheila Brazel. They are the parents of our wonderful page Kyra Colbert. Welcome.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, would you please help welcome J'Neene Coghlan and Dan Coghlan, who were Rotary Club auction winners for a good cause to have lunch with their MPP. They're both from Kingston, Speaker.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased to welcome to the chamber today Mrs. Sandy MacGuire from Port Elgin. She's sitting in the east gallery today.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to welcome Heidi and Jim Julien from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and their daughter. I've had the pleasure of their daughter working for me for a number of years here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to recognize Michael Cochla and his granddaughter Megan Cochla here today.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'd like to welcome Jill Birch, vice-president of development and alumni at OCAD University, and Carole Beaulieu, associate vice-president, university relations, of OCAD University.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I also want to welcome TOGA today. I understand that they brought us some fresh veggies and some other goodies. So welcome very much.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I take this opportunity to invite all members of the Legislature to help me welcome a very special guest who is en route. That is the Honourable Lord Nazir Ahmed, who is the first Pakistani-British individual to serve in the House of Lords in the British Parliament.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce friends and family of page Mateo who are joining us today at Queen's Park. We have his mother, Liz, his father, Vince, his brother and sister Tomas and Alessia, grandparents Maria and Camillo, cousins Rachel and Barb, and, finally, his friend Dante.

SHOOTING AT TORONTO EATON CENTRE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I believe the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is standing on a point of order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent so that the House may observe a moment of silence in recognition of the tragic shooting at the Eaton Centre this Saturday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has requested unanimous consent for a moment's silence in this House for the tragic events that happened at the Eaton Centre. Is it agreed? Agreed. Please join me.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: First let me say thank you for the moment of silence. The thoughts and prayers of the PC caucus are with all those impacted by the tragedy at the Eaton Centre on Saturday evening, and our thanks to our police and first responders for their quick response in addressing this issue, Speaker.

Premier, my question is to you concerning some other very bad news that transpired a few days ago, and that's the 2,000 layoffs at the GM line in Oshawa. That GM line was making the Equinox and the Impala. As auto sales are improving in the States, the Impala will continue to be produced; it's just being produced in Detroit instead of the province of Ontario. And the Equinox will continue to be produced; it's just going to be put in a reopened plant in Tennessee while they close down the line in Oshawa.

Premier, isn't this a clarion call for action? Can you tell us why they're moving production out of Ontario to the States and what you're going to do to increase the competitive nature of our province to keep jobs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague. But if I may, Speaker, on behalf of the government and on behalf of, if I may say as well, 13 million Ontarians, I want to express our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those who were affected by the tragedy that unfolded in the Eaton Centre this weekend. I also want to take the opportunity to thank the police as they pursue their investigation with rigour and persistence, and all those involved as first responders who dealt with this terrible issue.

I say to my honourable colleague with respect to the issue that he has raised that this did not come as a surprise to our government, but it certainly is a major disappointment nonetheless. There are families and jobs at stake here, and I can say at the outset that we will do everything that we possibly can to continue to work with GM and all of our auto sector to ensure that there is a bright future for the sector in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's my concern, Premier. I worry about the climate you've created in our province

that has made us less attractive for business investment. You've chosen to increase taxes. You've driven energy rates through the roof. You bind up businesses with more and more red tape almost on a daily basis.

Premier, not only are the Impala and Equinox moving across the border to the States, but this is the third GM plant to see this: a truck line in Oshawa similarly gone since 2009; Windsor has closed down a plant since 2009. Post-bailout, while auto sales have improved, my concern is that production is shifting into the United States of America while we want to see it right here in the province of Ontario—the latest 2,000 good, middle-class jobs that helped build Oshawa, Durham and the province of Ontario.

Premier, surely this is a call for a change of direction to lower taxes and affordable energy before more and more good jobs head south of the border.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'm proud to report, notwithstanding the bad news connected with GM just recently, that overall the auto sector has invested over \$1 billion since the recession. I think in large part we can take some measure of credit for that, because when GM and others were up against it in the context of that terrible recession, working with the federal government, we offered some financial support; we extended a hand of support. There were 485,000 jobs in total at risk there.

I'll remind you, Speaker, of something that my honourable colleague said just recently. I quote from the Toronto Sun from Saturday, June 2: "Ontario's auto bailout was a bad idea and the province should have stood aside and let Chrysler and General Motors go bankrupt, Progressive Conservative MPP Frank Klees said Friday." We're opposed to that approach. We think we need to continue to work hand in hand to strengthen the sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary. The member from Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Premier, when we were given the privilege and honour to govern in this province, the number one question in Oshawa at the time was, "Do I have to work another weekend?"

The 2,000 workers lost at General Motors are only a small part of the number of lost jobs as a result of Friday's announcement. Layoff notices have already been given to thousands more people as a result. Ontario may be a major shareholder in General Motors, but it has done nothing or little to aid the dozens of feeder companies supplying that line that has been shut down.

Premier, what are you going to do to support those multiple thousands of workers and Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I do not question my honourable colleague's sincerity with respect to the vigour of GM in his community. But I will say that we will continue to find ways to work with the auto sector and manufacturing in general, and we will not take the approach that has been historically advocated by the official opposition, where they've essentially said to businesses when they find themselves in trouble, "You're on your

own. If you can work it out, fine. If you can't work it out, that's fine as well."

We did not take that approach. We came to the table, together with the Obama administration and the Harper administration in Ottawa, and we put billions on the table to provide support, because there were 485,000 jobs at stake. I'm pleased to report that the auto sector is turning around. We are the number one producer of cars in North America, and we intend to keep it that way.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: The problem, Premier, is the auto sector's turning around in Tennessee. It's turning around in Michigan. It's turning around in the States. We want to see it turn around here in the province of Ontario.

Premier, there was further unfortunate news on Friday. Not only did we lose 2,000 jobs at GM, but we saw further revelations that our air ambulance system, Ornge, is in further crisis. We saw in detail cases where CPR could not be performed on patients. There were cases of outrageous delays. There were cases of Ornge not even picking up the phone for an emergency, and, sadly, cases of people actually dying.

Your minister's response to this revelation was to argue that this document never actually made it to cabinet. That's not an excuse; that's an indictment of the minister's failed leadership when it comes to the Ornge file. If it didn't go to cabinet, where did it go to?

Premier, this has got to be the last straw. Isn't it time for this minister to go? Will you ask for her resignation?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

I wasn't sure if you could hear me or not. I am suffering through an infection in my throat and I'm hoping that I don't have to use it that much.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Directly to my honourable colleague's question, my answer is, of course, no. But I do want to take this opportunity, Speaker, to talk a little bit about the great work that is done by those who provide ambulance services around the province.

Through our municipal services, last year, 914,000 patients were transferred; through Ornge, 19,000 patients were transferred. I know that we talk from time to time about some shortcomings on the front lines. But I think we should extend a hand of thanks from time to time to all those men and women who work so hard every single day to transfer nearly one million Ontario patients every single year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, of course we thank those working on the front lines of Ornge. It's the leadership, the administration, that is letting them down on a regular basis—that looks the other way.

You know, Premier, I thought you'd be as shocked as I was that a document of this magnitude and significance

detailing over and over again with incidents at Ornge, including deaths, had not found its way to cabinet. You wonder why it didn't get to cabinet. Why did the minister not even forward it to your attention?

This is not the first straw; it's the last. We've seen now a minister who met personally with Chris Mazza, the executive director at Ornge, and gave him the green light for his scheme. The same Minister of Health was warned over and over again in this House, in the public about legitimate patient safety concerns at Ornge, and she looked the other way. Now we see, despite all the questions in the House and the media, the minister not even sharing this document of the detailed wreckage happening at Ornge today.

If this is not it, Premier, where do you set the bar? It is time for this minister to resign.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I think it would be helpful for Ontarians to understand that from time to time, in keeping with legislative provision, the coroner has to take a look at some of the deaths when there is a patient who has expired in the course of transportation, before or after. I think it's important to take a look at what the coroner has to offer in this regard.

He says, "We have investigated all of the ORNGE cases brought to our attention. Some of those investigations are still ongoing. Of our completed investigations, there have been no cases in which issues with air ambulance transportation materially affected the course of the patient's illness or injury."

Speaker, I think this bears repetition: "There have been no cases in which issues with air ambulance transportation materially affected the course of the patient's illness or injury."

I think we can rely on the Ontario coroner in these matters.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Premier, you and I have stood in this place and we have debated many issues, from job losses to record deficits, a doubling of our debt, our recent credit downgrades. We've debated your further previous scandals at eHealth, the Lottery and Gaming Corp., LHINs, cricket clubs and such. But this has to do with life and death: page after page after page of scandalous revelations about the lack of ability to do CPR, potential deaths, phone calls that were never answered. Your minister has either looked the other way or not done her work in getting to the bottom of this affair and putting it right. She green-lighted Mr. Mazza's approach. She looked the other way when patient safety concerns were raised over and over again. And now this document of this magnitude isn't even raised in cabinet.

Premier, I would set a very different bar, a much higher bar, I think the appropriate bar, if I were Premier. This minister would be forced to resign and we would clean up this mess—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Premier?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again, I think it's important to distinguish between partisan interest and the public interest. I think, again, we should listen to the statement put out by Dr. Andrew McCallum, chief coroner, province of Ontario. Again, he says in part, "There have been recent concerns expressed by members of the Legislature about the...investigation of deaths where Ornge aircraft and crew have been involved...."

"We have investigated all of the Ornge cases brought to our attention" and "there have been no cases in which issues with air ambulance transportation materially affected the course of the patient's illness or injury."

I can understand my honourable colleague's efforts and intentions in this regard, but I think we owe it to Ontarians to be perfectly transparent when it comes to an independent third party expert who has looked at this matter, Speaker. I think Ontarians are entitled very much to rely on his conclusions.

1050

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, New Democrats would also like to join with Torontonians and Ontarians in expressing our horror at the events that occurred on Saturday at the Toronto Eaton Centre. Our thanks as well go out to the emergency workers who responded: police, fire, paramedics. They did a fantastic job in the midst of such chaos.

Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The Supreme Court of Canada found a scheme that legislated wages in British Columbia to be unconstitutional. Can the Premier name any Canadian jurisdiction that successfully legislated wages without ending up in a court case?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Obviously, there were a number before that preceded that particular court case. My honourable colleague will know that we have raised the matter of that court case numerous times in response to the initiative put forward by the official opposition. I think there was a case there that was appealed. It went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. It involved 9,000 workers and there was a penalty of some \$85 million awarded to those workers, so we are cautious of pursuing that approach.

That's why I say to my honourable colleague that the approach that we're bringing is decidedly different from the one that they brought originally in BC and the one advocated by the official opposition. We are, in fact, sitting down with all of our partners. We are at the negotiating table. We are bargaining hard; we're bargaining fairly. That's what we're doing. If that fails, if at the end of the day we can't get a result that's in keeping with our plan, then we'll have to explore other measures. But first, we owe it to our workers to sit down and work with them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, maybe the Premier can tell us how many millions of dollars the people of

Ontario are going to have to pay if the government ends up in such a court case and loses.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada set out an approach. We are taking that approach, and we are going to do so in a way that is thoughtful and responsible, and one that would hopefully enlist the support of my honourable colleague the leader of the third party. We're going to do it in a way that is respectful.

Now, if my honourable colleague has a different approach that she would advocate that would both be fair to workers in terms of respect for the process and be fair to taxpayers who want us to eliminate a significant deficit, then I would be only too pleased to receive that particular approach from her.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, can the Premier tell us how many educational worker representatives are still at the government's discussion table at this point in time?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'm not sure I got the gist of the question, but sometimes it doesn't matter, I guess—terrible honesty.

I say again to my honourable colleague, if there is an approach that satisfactorily marries up our responsibility to be respectful of the collective bargaining process with our responsibility to eliminate the deficit and protect the gains we've that made in our schools and our health care and put this economy on a stronger foundation for growth going forward, then I would only be too pleased to hear from her in this regard.

We've heard from the official opposition. We have both rejected that particular approach. If my honourable colleague has her own distinct approach, we would welcome that.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my next question is to the Premier. Most education worker representatives have, in fact, walked away in frustration. What steps has the Premier taken to get people back to the table and to keep talking?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, the table is still open and active. My honourable colleague knows that what we have in place is a new construct, something that I'm proud to say that we created. It's a provincial discussion table. There is no legal obligation on the part of federations, the people who work in our school system, to participate in this. The fact of the matter is, during the first two rounds back in 2003 and our government in 2008, we were able to find a way to find some accommodation through this new construct of a provincial discussion table. So we would invite those who have left the table to return to the table. We know it's only voluntary on their part, Speaker, but we are convinced that there is still some common ground on which we can build and find a way forward together.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I asked the Premier in the last question what he's actually doing to get people to come back to the discussion table. This is where it gets a little bit confusing, Speaker. The Premier says that legislated wage schemes are simplistic and doomed to fail, and that discussion and bargaining are the only way to reach our goals. But he's not talking to a huge number of educators and he plans to impose the very simplistic solution that, in his own opinion, is doomed to fail. So can the Premier help us make a little bit more sense of this situation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, what we are pursuing is not easy. I think my honourable colleague recognizes that; I think we all recognize that. What we're saying is, on behalf of all Ontarians, we've got to hit the pause button on wages for a couple of years, given our fiscal challenge and given the fact that we're living through a period of slow economic growth.

We did receive some advice from the Drummond commission that said, with respect to education, that we should let about 20,000 people go, that we should allow class sizes to increase, that we should not proceed with the rollout of full-day kindergarten, that we should let go some 10,000 or 11,000 educational support workers. We're not prepared to do that. That's 20,000 jobs; that's 20,000 families that are counting on those jobs. So instead, our preference is to hit the pause button on pay for a couple of years. We think that's reasonable. We think that's responsible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the people who teach our kids and keep our schools safe and clean understand that times are tough and money's tight. In fact, many have already said they're ready to take a wage freeze. But when they look to the Premier for a respectful discussion—funny that he uses those words—when they look to him for that respectful discussion, they hear simplistic schemes of the sort that the Premier used to denounce. If the Premier wants to have a respectful conversation, will he start today by dropping the schemes that he knows won't work and getting people back to the table?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure what these schemes are that are referenced by my honourable colleague. I can say that there is hard bargaining to be done and that we are more than prepared to continue to engage in that.

I think it is worth our while to consider what we've done together through the approach that we've taken in the past eight or nine years now. We do have smaller classes, we haven't lost a single day to a strike, we have higher test scores, we have higher graduation rates and our schools are recognized as being the best in the English-speaking world. I would suggest to my honourable colleague, to our partners in the education sector and to Ontarians as a whole, we have come a long way, we are proud of our success, there's more to be done and the only way to get that done is by continuing to work together.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, this document to which the Premier referred and admitted he hadn't seen is marked for cabinet purposes—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is this to the Premier?

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Frank Klees: It lists some 67 cases in which Ornge was not able to respond appropriately to a call. Forty of those incidents occurred since January of this year, in a number of those cases patients died, and the coroner has yet to investigate a number of those cases.

When the Premier stands in his place today and absolves Ornge and wants to calm us here in the House because the coroner has not pointed a direct finger at Ornge for some of the deaths that he has investigated gives us no solace at all. Is the Premier saying to us that it's going to take a death before he steps in and fixes Ornge?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's very important that we take the advice of people who have the skills, people who have the expertise, people who are independent of this Legislature, to do their work and to respect the work that they do. I, Speaker, will take the word of the chief coroner of Ontario over the word of the member from Newmarket–Aurora any day.

The member opposite has completely misrepresented the information that he divulged—

Interjections.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister will withdraw.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I withdraw.

Speaker, the member opposite has jumped to conclusions about information. The coroner, when he heard about this information, released a statement. I would like to share that with the member from Newmarket–Aurora. What he has done is entirely irresponsible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, here's what's irresponsible: This is a briefing that goes to cabinet every single week. It recounts some 70 cases where Ornge air ambulance has failed to respond appropriately.

Let me ask the minister, how do we appropriately interpret this? And I quote from her document: "Some unknown patient care issue in flight—delay in extricating patient from helicopter due to stretcher jamming issue. Patient declared in ER. Coroner will be notified." How do you properly interpret that, Minister? I want to know this from this minister: Why does she insist on suggesting that we are somehow on the wrong side of the issue when patients are not being served well, when patients are dying? Who is she protecting?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please. Be seated, please.
Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, let me read from the statement from the chief coroner, Dr. Andrew McCallum: "We have investigated all of the Ornge cases brought to our attention. Some of those investigations are still ongoing. Of our completed investigations, there have been no cases in which issues with air ambulance transportation materially affected the course of the patient's illness or injury."

Speaker, these are the words of an extremely competent, highly respected, independent coroner. As I said before, the words of the coroner are far more meaningful to me than the words of the member opposite.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, to the Minister of Energy: Just days before the last election, this government cancelled a planned gas-fired power plant in Mississauga. Since that time, they've refused to share any information about the cost of this bungling with the people of Ontario. Can the minister confirm that the Ontario Power Authority has offered \$82 million in compensation to an American hedge fund?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We did make that commitment as a party shortly before the last election—a commitment, I might add, that was not only supported but endorsed almost immediately by both the opposition and the third party. They have never changed that endorsement. So we're all on the same page. We made the commitment to make sure that we would relocate the plant from Mississauga. Those discussions are ongoing, and I look forward to reporting when there is something to report about the results of those discussions.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham, come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, the minister sure didn't report to this House that he had made an \$82-million offer. People had to find out by going to American court records. That's just to settle one court case, one amongst many. It seems that the government has forgotten that it's the people of Ontario who own the system, who pay for the system, not the Liberal Party. They deserve to know what this mess is going to cost.

Will the minister ask the Auditor General to come in and review and tell the people of Ontario what your bungling will cost us?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As I've said, we committed to the people of Mississauga, to the western part of the GTA, that we would not build a plant on that site, that we would in fact relocate it. We're involved on behalf of the people of the province—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. Christopher Bentley:—in some very confidential, sensitive negotiations and defence of lawsuits on both sides of the border. We're there to defend the interests of the people of the province of Ontario, and as they come to a conclusion, as we have something further to report, I will be speaking further about that.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Mike Colle: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday a low-life coward opened fire in the Eaton Centre food court, resulting in several wounded and a shaken city of Toronto. One young man is dead, another young man is in critical condition, and an innocent 13-year-old boy visiting from Port Hope with his family, luckily, is in critical but stable condition and responding to treatment. Our prayers are with him and his family.

Four other bystanders were also injured. A pregnant woman was pushed to the ground, knocked down; thankfully she and her unborn child are in stable condition. I'm sure all our prayers and thoughts are with all those who were injured and victimized by this senseless and cowardly act. As Deputy Chief McGuire said, "one idiot with a gun."

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, all the people of Toronto and Ontario want to know, what are we doing and what can we do more to make sure that our public places like the Eaton Centre are safe from these criminals with guns?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président. This careless act of violence is very, very disturbing. My condolences go out to the family and friends of the deceased, and I hope for a quick recovery for all of those who were injured.

Mr. Speaker, as a former nurse in the delivery room, I was very perturbed to hear that an expectant mother went into early labour, and I hope that she and her baby are doing well.

I also want to thank the Toronto police, the first responders, the doctors, the nurses, who saved lives and who are helping the wounded to recover.

The Toronto Police Service has reported that an arrest has been made. I cannot comment further on this case.

In general, Mr. Speaker, public safety is a top priority for our government. We have invested \$100 million in the guns and gangs strategy, including over \$35 million in TAVIS. We will continue to invest to make sure that Toronto and all Ontario people are very safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Minister. I know I've seen first-hand in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence where the TAVIS emergency task force and the guns and gangs task force has done an outstanding job 24/7; in fact, I had a gangland slaying in my own riding about a month ago. Our government is working with the Toronto police, with that excellent organization we've created, TAVIS. But I guess the question, Minister, is, sure there are these idiots

with guns, but what about the victims? In this case here, we've got all kinds of victims that are suffering because of this senseless act. What do we have in place to help the victims of these criminal cowardly acts?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: An excellent question from the member for Eglinton—Lawrence. The government increased the Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services program annual budget by \$1.8 million in 2007 to \$9.4 million. This program, along with the companion Victim Quick Response program, provides financial assistance in the immediate aftermath of violent crime by helping to cover the costs of emergency expenses, funeral expenses, and counselling for eligible victims of crime and their families. The Ministry of the Attorney General has spent \$855 million on vital services for victims of crime since 2003. In 2011-12, we will spend an additional \$118 million. We have introduced the Financial Assistance for Families of Homicide Victims program to meet the high level of needs of parents and spouses of homicide victims.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I want to share with members of this House the one sentence that the Minister of Health chose not to read from the coroner's letter, and it says this: "Some of those investigations are still ongoing." What is very interesting is that the minister's attempt to represent the coroner's statement is to say that all things are fine at Ornge. What I want to point out to the minister is that it's not just about people who died; it's about all of those other people who weren't properly responded to and we don't know.

1110

By the way, what the coroner has said is not that he proved that people didn't die; he said that, quite frankly, transportation did not materially affect—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, what Ontarians expect is a service that responds—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to know from the minister, why does she continue to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, let me read the entire statement from the chief coroner, province of Ontario:

"There have been recent concerns expressed by members of the Legislature about the role of the Office of the Chief Coroner in the investigation of deaths where Ornge aircraft and crew have been involved with the care of the deceased person. I would like to clarify the role of my office in these investigations.

"We have investigated all of the Ornge cases brought to our attention. Some of those investigations are still ongoing. Of our completed investigations, there have been no cases in which issues with air ambulance transporta-

tion materially affected the course of the patient's illness or injury.

"Should any one of the ongoing investigations meet the appropriate criteria under the Coroners Act, an inquest would be considered.

"In every case that is brought to our attention, the coroner investigates and will continue to do so to ensure public safety in Ontario."

That is the complete statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Now that she has clarified the fact that the coroner continues to investigate cases that were reported, I would like to know from the minister—the report that goes to cabinet or to her, which she may or may not be sharing with cabinet for whatever reason, lists some 70 cases that have been investigated, that continue to be investigated, where either there haven't been enough pilots, have not been enough paramedics, hasn't been appropriate accommodation of emergency calls. I would like to know from the minister, what is she doing to ensure that the people of this province can rely on their air ambulance service? Because ever since she has taken the so-called decisive steps, the incidents of not being able to respond continue—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Frank Klees: In fact, there are more in the last few—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Again, I remind all members that when I say thank you, that is the end of your question. I've given you a wrap-up time when I say "question" or "answer." A reminder to everyone: Please stay within that time frame.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the member opposite is doing a terrible disservice to the family members of loved ones who have passed away. He is doing an enormous disservice to the front-line paramedics, the pilots, all of the crews, the people who provide Ornge air transport.

We have made significant improvements at Ornge. We have Bill 50 before the House. I would like the member opposite to commit to supporting Bill 50.

He might be interested to know that since 2007, 100,000 patients have been transported. They are grateful to Ornge for getting them to the care they need. Of the 100,000 patients transferred, 26 cases involving deaths were investigated—the coroner is notified—and of these 26 cases, the coroner has ordered an inquest into zero.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. GM has announced that it is shutting down its consolidated line in Oshawa, putting 2,000 workers out of a job. Several years ago, as you stated, the Ontario and Canadian governments provided billions of dollars in loans to prevent GM from folding altogether. In an earlier question, you said, "We will do what we can." What exactly does that mean?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the question. Again, as the Premier expressed, we're always concerned when jobs are impacted in any sector, in particular our auto sector. But at the same time, the investments that we've made to keep the auto sector going in this province, to keep GM alive, have ensured that 485,000 Ontarians are working today. Those are investments that were extremely important to our economy.

When it comes to GM specifically—the Premier indicated this earlier—since the recession, GM has invested over \$1 billion in this province. That is as part of their commitment—they made these investments as part of their commitment for the assistance provided in restructuring, a good investment that saved GM and 485,000 jobs in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The minister didn't answer the question. I know you're concerned, but Ontario, along with the federal government, is a 10% owner of General Motors. It's a fact that we need to remember.

You had a chance in 2009 to save the 2,000 jobs when you negotiated the Canadian footprint language in the bailout package, and you still have a great opportunity to expand the Canadian footprint.

These layoffs represent a betrayal of the tremendous work and sacrifices that taxpayers and the CAW members made to keep General Motors afloat in 2009. The question I'm asking you is, what specific actions are you and the Premier taking today to save the 2,000 jobs that are going to be lost?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, first off, it's not a foregone conclusion that those jobs are lost. Indeed, some of those workers may well be moving over to work on the flex line—investments that were made in partnership with our government, that your party probably didn't support, and for sure the PCs didn't. So it's a little bit challenging for me to get questions from the member when his party has questioned the very investments we've made.

You just look at the investments that GM has made since 2009, many in partnership with this government, many that were quiet partnerships that your party didn't support: \$480 million in St. Catharines, 300 jobs; \$96 million at the CAMI assembly plant in Ingersoll; a \$185-million investment in Oshawa for that flex line, where a number of the workers who may be impacted may end up working after all.

I don't share the pessimism of the member opposite. Some \$2.3 billion has been invested in this sector since 2009 and we're proud of that.

PHOTO IDENTIFICATION

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question to the Minister of Government Services. Photo ID is something that many Ontarians take for granted. For those who either choose

not to drive or are unable to due to medical conditions, getting a government-issued ID is not so simple. Many locations do not recognize health cards as a valid form of ID. Some people don't have a passport, and for those who do, it's difficult to carry it around everywhere they go.

Mr. Speaker, through you, could the Minister of Government Services tell us what the government is doing to address this problem and what the reaction has been?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Brampton West for asking this question, and for his support on this file as well.

In July 2011, our government issued a new photo ID card in about 21 locations. Anyone who is over 16 years of age and does not have a valid driver's licence is eligible to get a new photo ID card. Some 1.5 million Ontarians actually are eligible to get this card, and since July 2011, 40,000 people have already applied for the new photo ID card. We have strong support from various organizations, like the epilepsy organization, the CNIB and also CARP, for this great initiative, and the people—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer? Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you, Minister, for the answer. I know many seniors and citizens who do not drive are thrilled with this new initiative. Our government made the commitment to introduce this alternative form of ID, and my constituents tell me they're thrilled about this new offering.

It's my understanding that this card is currently only available in select locations and not on the entire ServiceOntario network. While I'm happy to hear about this exciting program, could the minister please let the House know when we can expect to see the photo ID card available in more ServiceOntario locations?

1120

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, we are moving ahead with the new photo ID card in all locations this year. It's already introduced, since July, in 21 locations. It's now available in 85 locations, and I'm pleased to tell the member from Brampton West that the photo ID card will be available in all Brampton locations by October this year. We are moving in a very systematic manner to have this ID card available in all locations by the end of this year.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. On February 28, 2012, the certification and compliance branch of the Ministry of Health did a spot investigation of the Ornge flight base in London. This is right in the heart of your riding and Minister Bentley's riding. Minister, there was a spot investigation of that base on that day conducted by your own ministry. Since you have now had the weekend to read the leaked cabinet document, can you inform this House and your colleagues as to what happened on that day?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what I can tell you is that the document that was released by the mem-

ber from Newmarket–Aurora demonstrates how seriously we take every incident that is reported to us. It doesn't matter who reports that incident. It might be a family member, it might be a paramedic, it might be a pilot, it might be a member of this Legislature, it might be a member of the media. No matter who reports an incident to us, we take that very, very seriously.

The document makes it clear that every incident is investigated. Where there are lessons to be learned, those changes are made. Where the coroner needs to be notified, the coroner is notified. It is up to the coroner to determine whether or not an investigation or an inquest indeed be conducted, Speaker.

We are committed to improving safety at Ornge. It's a long-standing commitment, and I can tell you that we remain committed to patient safety.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Back to the Minister of Health and the member for London North Centre. Have you not been briefed, yet again? On February 28, February of this year, after your so-called decisive action, the spot inspection conducted by your own ministry officials found there were no paramedics on duty at all—this despite the fact that Ornge, under your new leadership, told the ministry in writing that there would be at least one critical care paramedic on duty. The London base covers Haldimand–Norfolk, Oxford, Middlesex, Chatham, southwestern Ontario, including London.

You have stood in your place repeatedly and told us of your sorry list of indecisive actions. Does this list now include allowing one of the Ornge regional helicopter bases, particularly the one in the minister's own backyard, to go unstaffed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we have got new leadership at Ornge. We have a new board of directors. We have a new senior management team at Ornge. They are very familiar with the issues that have been raised by the member opposite. In fact, I would say that a spot audit demonstrates that they are determined to monitor and improve upon any issues that might arise in those spot audits.

I can tell you that the 100,000 people who have been successfully transported by Ornge are grateful for the care they received. Their families are grateful for the care they received. Speaker, I think we owe it to those families, I think we owe it to the front-line staff, to have a constructive conversation that is free from the outrageous partisanship that is being demonstrated by the party opposite.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. These are difficult times for families in downtown Hamilton. Soon the doors are going to close for the last time on their schools, and students will be forced to take long bus rides to schools far from their own neighbourhoods. The ripple effect is definitely going to be felt by the community, Speaker.

My question for the Premier is this: Is the hollowing out of inner-city education part of the government's Places to Grow plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have a chance to talk about the fact that the communities in Hamilton and the school boards are undertaking important conversations. Local decision-making, which is a process that we very much respect, is ongoing in those communities.

We know very well the challenges that Hamilton has with respect to declining enrolment. We currently sit with more than 3,000 empty high school spaces in Hamilton. But what I'm very proud about is the fact that, if we take a look at what has been invested in Hamilton, I think that the leader of the third party would be very interested to know and to share with her community that funding has increased by 48.6% in Hamilton between 2002 and now, and enrolment at the board has declined by 6.1%. The per pupil funding has increased by 58.4%.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Decisions made by this government have forced the hand of Hamilton–Wentworth District School Board. There's no better way to stifle growth in a community than take away its schools, except maybe to take away its jobs. Hamilton's downtown will suffer for a short-sighted decision to move the board's education centre out of the downtown core. This government is sitting on the sidelines when it should be encouraging boards of education to be partners in city-building.

I ask again, is the hollowing out of inner-city education and the removal of hundreds of jobs part of the government's Places to Grow plan?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The leader of the third party knows full well that these are local decisions, and I would encourage her to reflect upon what she is suggesting. We need to respect the elected local voice that makes decisions in communities right across the province. Our part, from the provincial government, is to provide funding. And let me tell you, Speaker, since we have formed office, 11 new schools are open, under construction or planned in the Hamilton–Wentworth Catholic District School Board, and 14 new schools are open or under construction or planned in the Hamilton–Wentworth District School Board. The total for two boards in new capital investments since we formed office is \$360 million.

We support public education and Catholic education in Hamilton. We're proud of the success in those schools, but we respect local decisions.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: My shared question with MPP Leal is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

The Highway 407 east extension is one of the most important pieces of infrastructure ever to be built in Durham region, and I was pleased to see our contracts have reached the point to begin construction on phase

one of the extension from Brock Road in Pickering to Harmony Road in Oshawa. Local suppliers and business people are telling me that the direct and indirect economic benefit to them from getting shovels in the ground on this project has the potential to be huge. However, other constituents I speak to are concerned that this is simply an extension of the 407 ETR, a private highway that many avoid for many number of reasons.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister clarify the difference for my constituents in Ajax–Pickering?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I want to thank the member for Ajax–Pickering for raising this issue, because it is an important one for Durham.

To be very clear, Highway 407 east from Pickering to Clarington will be a publicly owned highway, but we're not surprised that the member's constituents have concerns. The last time the PC Party sat in power, they sold off the original Highway 407 for pennies on the dollar in an attempt to plug a multi-billion dollar budget hole leading up to an election. That ironclad deal the Tories signed ensured that, for almost a century, the people of Ontario will have no influence over the tolls on the current 407 ETR and will not benefit from its revenues.

The new 407 east will remain publicly owned. We're proud to see this project moving forward, creating thousands of direct and indirect jobs in the local Durham economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary, the member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to pick up where the outstanding member for Ajax–Pickering left off on the regional economic benefits to be realized from this highway extension, not just to Harmony Road but right through to Highway 35/115 just south of Orono.

Building this important link will directly connect communities in the GTA–Durham region with Peterborough and the beautiful Kawarthas, and will relieve a substantial amount of traffic congestion on the 401 between Toronto and Oshawa.

I spoke to business owners in—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

1130

Mr. Jeff Leal: —just last week who require frequent shipments by highway to and from the GTA. They tell me that in a just-in-time business world, depending solely on the 401 to facilitate that rapid link is an ongoing concern for them.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister explain to businesses in Peterborough and East Durham why a two-stage approach is necessary to build the 407 east by 2020 and not just one?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, I acknowledge the tireless efforts of the member for Peterborough in securing this highway for Peterborough and the Kawarthas.

The answer is straightforward. New highway projects of this magnitude typically stage construction. For example, the original 407, which the Tories sold off, was built in seven phases. Staging ensures more efficient inte-

gration with existing infrastructure and helps manage the province's finances in a way that's responsible to taxpayers. Our approach allows us to meet our 2020 objective of having Highway 35/115 connected to Pickering via the 407 east.

This is one of the most significant highway construction projects in the province's history. Leveraging Infrastructure Ontario's expertise, we're going to get it done on time and get the best possible deal for Ontario taxpayers.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Health. Speaker, families throughout Ontario have been shocked and saddened to learn that the corruption and compromised patient safety at Ornge has extended into their communities and has taken the lives of their friends and neighbours.

Nowhere is this truer than in Waterloo region, where Ornge's launch policy was responsible for a serious delay in its response to a helicopter crash. The Ministry of Health's internal investigation is unmistakable in its assessment of Ornge's fault and failure.

So I ask the minister, what does she have to say to the people of Waterloo region, who no longer have faith in her and this Liberal government to come to their aid in times of emergency?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to issues that are so vitally important, such as patient safety, I rely on Ontario's chief coroner to do his job. We had a rather astonishing event on Friday, Speaker, when the member from Newmarket–Aurora first accused the coroner of not doing his job. The member opposite accused the coroner of not doing his job. When he discovered that the coroner was in fact fully engaged, informed and doing investigations, he then decided that, well, he just doesn't accept what the coroner has to say.

Speaker, we have a big responsibility in this House, a responsibility to tell the truth. The family members of these patients deserve to be treated with respect, not to have information batted around here in this place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: That's not good enough, Minister. The people of Waterloo region expect better than that.

Speaker, the Minister of Health has overseen the continued scandal at Ornge. As a result, residents in the region of Waterloo are left without access to adequate air ambulance service. The minister is just as responsible for the 95 investigations and the 19 deaths that have occurred under her watch as are Dr. Mazza and his band of thieves at Ornge. Minister, your failure to address emergency dispatching problems led to a serious delay in Ornge's response to a fatal helicopter crash in Waterloo region.

Speaker, I ask the minister, will she show respect for the families of Waterloo region and resign today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as the rhetoric on the other side spins to ever higher heights, I remain focused on doing what's right for patients. I stand by the front-line staff. I stand by those paramedics, those pilots, the others who deliver this service. I stand by the patients.

If the members opposite really wanted to be part of the solution, they would stop blocking Bill 50; they would let Bill 50 pass so we can get on with the transformation at Ornge.

TUITION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The McGuinty government says its Ontario tuition grant is improving affordability and access to post-secondary education, but—there's always a “but” with the McGuinty government—only one in three Ontario students currently qualify for the grant, and there is growing concern that even fewer students are actually getting the grant. When will the government finally make public the data indicating how many Ontario students actually receive the tuition grant?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We are very, very proud on this side of the investments we've made in higher education and the unprecedented contribution to tuition assistance in the 30% tuition drop. When the program is fully fleshed out, which will be over the next 12 months, it will attain probably close to 300,000. The take-up we believe in the first place, because we rushed it forward to help students out right away in January, is in the area of about 60%. But Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of the fact that of roughly 600,000 undergraduate students—I will say this very slowly—475,000 received student aid from this government, which I think is unprecedented in the history of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Back to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: Earlier this year, the government said that over 300 students would benefit from the grant. I agree that that's what you said. But last week, a government official was reported as stating that only 200 students had received it. That's only one in five university—

Mr. Jonah Schein: Two hundred thousand.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Two hundred thousand; excuse me, I'm going to correct myself on that. But last week, a government official was reported as stating that only 200,000 students had received it. That's only one in five university and college students in Ontario, or 100,000 students left out in the cold. Why won't the government release data on the uptake of this grant? Ontarians deserve to know whether this grant is working or, as student groups and others believe, the grant is failing to provide relief from Canada's highest tuition rates for the vast majority of students.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The numbers of students that got it when we implemented this within two months,

quite frankly, of getting elected, was extraordinary. We said very clearly at the time that it would take a year to roll this out. The take-up has been excellent, to hundreds of thousands of students now.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is one would expect a little humility from the party opposite, given that we have also, at the same time as improving affordability, added 210,000 seats, or added \$6.2 billion to post-secondary education. Funding for universities and colleges declined when both parties opposite were in power and was frozen essentially for 20 years. We have seen most universities with a 60% or more increase in their funding. We're proud of that.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Government Services on a point of order.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: While responding to the member from Brampton West, I said that in Brampton the photo ID card will be available by the end of June. I should have said by the end of October, so I wanted to correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is allowed to correct his record and that is a point of order.

DEFERRED VOTES

STRONG ACTION FOR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR UNE ACTION ÉNERGIQUE POUR L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 55. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The members take their seats, please. All members take your seats, please. I can't use the booming voice today.

On May 1, Mr. Duguid moved second reading of Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts.

All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted
Balkissoon, Bas	Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil
Bartolucci, Rick	Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine
Bentley, Christopher	Duncan, Dwight	Milloy, John
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Best, Margaret	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczek, Helena	Piruzza, Teresa
Chan, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz

Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Craitor, Kim
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob

Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinity, Dalton

Sergio, Mario
Sorbara, Greg
Takharr, Harinder S.
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotan, Laurel C.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Craitor, Kim
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad

Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinity, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul

Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Orazietti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sorbara, Greg
Tabuns, Peter
Takharr, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 51; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House on May 31, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (RENT INCREASE GUIDELINE), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION (TAUX LÉGAL D'AUGMENTATION DES LOYERS)

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne le taux légal d'augmentation des loyers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1149.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members take their seats, please.

On March 27, Ms. Wynne moved second reading of Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline.

All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas

Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy

Milloy, John
Morici, Reza
Murray, Glen R.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 67; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House on May 31, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1153 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce Shelley Ratelband, who is not yet in the gallery but she will be. She's a lady who works in my office in Woodstock—just recently started there. She came to see how things work at Queen's Park, and I'd like to welcome her to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We definitely welcome our guests to Queen's Park to see how things run.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. John Yakabuski: Fifty years ago today, history was made when a switch was flipped and the nuclear

power demonstration reactor—NPD—near Rolphton, Ontario, in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, sent power to the grid.

This was the first nuclear power that flowed into our electricity system. It began what has been a long history of success, not only for our Candu reactors and their technology but also for the prosperity of the province of Ontario. By proving that nuclear power could be produced reliably, safely and economically, it ensured that Ontario would have a sustainable supply of power as its biggest industrial growth period coincided with the nuclear era.

What was Canada's first delivery of commercial nuclear power has grown into a system that provides over 50% of our power today. In fact, reactors at Pickering, Darlington and Bruce Power produced 57% of Ontario's electricity in 2011.

The NPD is no longer in service. In 1987, after 25 years of success and far exceeding all of its original goals, it was retired. It had been used extensively as a training reactor for generations of Canadian and international staff on the safe operation of Candu power plants all over the world. Access to safe, reliable, affordable electricity is part of the foundation of a successful economy from which our standard of living evolves.

I am proud to say that it began right in my backyard, and I commend all of those whose faith and vision made history and changed our world for the better.

ANNIVERSARY OF ATTACK ON THE DARBAR SAHIB

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Today marks the 28th anniversary of the invasion of the Darbar Sahib complex, also known as the Golden Temple, in Amritsar, India. On this day 28 years ago, the Darbar Sahib and close to 50 other Sikh places of worship were attacked in a systematic and organized manner. Specifically, the Indian state ordered a military attack to be carried out against the Golden Temple during one of the Sikh religion's most revered days. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children were inside the Golden Temple complex when the army began using heavy artillery.

Dr. Joyce J.M. Pettigrew, a leading academic, describes the purpose of the Indian state's action in a very telling and moving quote in which she states that, "The army went into Darbar Sahib complex not to eliminate a political figure or a political movement but to suppress the culture of a people, to attack their hearts, and to strike a blow at their spirit and self-confidence."

Ontario is home to one of the largest communities in the Sikh diaspora and, consequently, also home to many survivors and family members of the 1984 attack. I want to express my deepest sympathy to those who lost friends and family members in June 1984.

Beyond sympathy, it is also fitting that we continue to call for justice and accountability. When innocent lives are lost through the actions of the very government that is duty-bound to protect them, with no accountability or

explanation, and when journalists and human rights groups are denied the ability to provide independent observations, we must ask for justice. We must ensure that this never happens again—not here, not against any people in the world. Lest we forget: June 1984.

ITALIAN REPUBLIC DAY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: This past Saturday marked the 66th annual la Festa della Repubblica, commemorating the birth of the Republic of Italy in 1946. Italians in Italy and around the world, including Canadians of Italian origin, celebrated this important occasion. I would like to note, Mr. Speaker, that the significance of this date is important also because Italian women were allowed to vote for the first time on that day.

This year's festivities took on a sombre note to honour the victims of the recent devastating earthquake in the region of Emilia-Romagna in northern Italy.

Here at Queen's Park, dozens of people gathered on the grounds of our Legislature for the traditional flag-raising, despite the wind and the unseasonably cold temperatures. The ceremony, which saw the presence of numerous members of our Legislature, members of Parliament, the diplomatic corps of other countries, community organizations and ordinary citizens, also kicked off the month-long festivities of Italian Heritage Month, proclaimed by the government of Ontario in 2010 to recognize the significant contributions Italian Canadians have made to the social, economic and cultural life of our province. I joined with pride in these celebrations.

It's very important to share with younger generations the history, the heritage and the culture of different communities that are part of our mosaic, so that greater mutual respect and understanding can foster and flourish.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Last month—a couple of weeks ago, actually—the Minister of Energy was given the opportunity before the Standing Committee on Estimates to be forthright with Ontarians about the cost related to the cancellation of the Mississauga power plant. Sadly, the minister refused to do so. The minister was asked to table documents before that committee related to the cancellation. He has yet to do that. He was asked again in the House this morning and avoided a direct answer.

But on Friday, we learned that the Ontario Power Authority, under the minister's watch, offered \$82 million to settle a \$300-million lawsuit filed as a result of a political seat-saver program.

Now, the one thing the minister did disclose at the committee last month was that he learned of the cancellation of the Mississauga power plant by reading it in the newspaper that weekend. This was obviously not a cabinet decision—a cabinet he sat on at the time. We learned, sadly, that Ontario's energy policy was written on a napkin by campaign workers early one Saturday morning.

I call on the minister to tell Ontarians whether he plans to recoup the \$82 million from the taxpayers or from the ratepayers in the form of a hidden or a new fee on their hydro bills.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Northerners are truly a resilient lot. Two weekends ago, it was forest fires in Timmins and Kirkland Lake, and last weekend, it was braving the weather elements in order to attend a rally in Cochrane in regard to the privatization of Ontario Northland.

What's clear is that this government is starting to set up, not by just the privatization but by a number of other things that they've done, a real sense in northern Ontario of alienation from Queen's Park and alienation from this province.

I think it's rather unfortunate, because where we could be working together in order to build a stronger Ontario, this government is doing initiatives such as the privatization of Ontario Northland, driving a wedge between north and south. I think, in the end, that doesn't serve either northern or southern Ontario well.

People were clear: The Ontario Northland is part of an infrastructure that is important to northern Ontario. We applaud the government for providing subsidies to GO Transit to the tune of over \$500 million a year. But people in northern Ontario wonder why the government can't find \$24 million a year to run a railway, a bus service, a telecommunications network and a marine service in northern Ontario in places like Moosonee down to North Bay.

So I say to the government: You still have a chance to think this through. We saw this morning that the government has agreed with New Democrats to pull back a little bit when it comes to the privatization they want to do across line ministries. Now you've got to go the full step and you've got to stop the privatization of ONR, because this is now no longer just about privatization; it's also about the alienation of people in northern Ontario.

FLOODING

Mr. Bill Mauro: The work continues in Thunder Bay. The floodwaters have ended, but they left their mark on the city of Thunder Bay and surrounding region, as well as the result of the backup and failure of the sewage treatment plant in the city of Thunder Bay.

On Thursday, I had the opportunity to tour out in Conmee with Kevin Holland and to drive through Oliver Paipoonge and see the devastation that these floodwaters created.

As well, yesterday morning, I spent a significant amount of time out in Kaministiquia with their roads board chair Leila Hobbie and board chairperson April Maki in the Silver Falls Road area. I'm told, and I can convey to them, that apparently those floodwaters on the Upper Kam are not expected to rise any more.

I want to thank Rene Legrose and his wife Debbie from the Kam Community Centre as well for their work. I want to thank Rick Kieri, Ron Nelson and Ziggy Polkowski, three of my rural mayors, as well, who confirmed that everything is good out in their region and they're not looking for provincial assistance at this point.

Speaker, so many volunteers to thank, but a special nod to the St. Peter's Church group in the east end, a place that holds a special spot in my heart and my family's heart; the Thunder Bay fire department; all local fire departments; police; OPP; hydro; OPG; municipal employees; emergency operations; the district health unit; the Thunder Bay safe home program; MNR and MTO employees; the Red Cross, who have travelled from across the province to be in Thunder Bay and across the country; the Salvation Army; Clothing Assistance; Slovak Legion—so many to mention who have come together in typical northwestern Ontario fashion to try to lend support to all the people who have been affected by this flood.

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GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr. Michael Harris: Last month, I asked the environment minister a very direct question about his plans to introduce a carbon pricing scheme here in Ontario under the Western Climate Initiative. Although the minister had confirmed to me in April that the Liberal government was in fact pushing ahead with this scheme, he publicly denied it during question period, saying it didn't exist.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Western Climate Initiative does exist, and the minister should be ashamed of himself for misleading this House and the public. Just because—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw that.

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdrawn.

Just because the Liberal government missed the January 1 deadline to begin implementing this agreement doesn't mean it disappeared.

The Liberals already have the laws and regulations for the scheme on the books.

I'd like to remind the minister about the Liberal government's amendment to the Environmental Protection Act in 2009, which authorizes the making of regulations relating to emissions trading. Guess what the Liberals did with this new authority? They created more red tape for Ontario businesses by establishing a regulation that requires certain industries to annually report their greenhouse gas emissions to the government.

Now, the next stage of their plan, according to the Western Climate Initiative, is for Ontario to join an inter-jurisdictional cap-and-trade market with the remaining members of this agreement.

Still the Liberal government continues to be silent on this matter.

Businesses want to know if they're going to have to fork over millions of dollars to comply with Ontario's planned carbon pricing scheme. So it's time for the min-

ister to be honest with Ontarians and disclose the Liberal government's plans today.

JAN DE VRIES

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. Jan de Vries, a distinguished Canadian and decorated war veteran who passed away on Sunday, May 27.

Mr. de Vries was a gifted speaker and dedicated community volunteer. He delighted in teaching Canadians, especially our youth, about wartime contributions made by our proud military servicemen and women who, like himself, fought shoulder-to-shoulder with our allies in the face of tyranny in Europe.

As a member of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, in the early hours of June 6, 1944, Mr. de Vries valiantly parachuted into France in advance of the beach landings at just 20 years of age.

Wounded by a sniper in Normandy, he returned to the battalion, fighting in many key battles before parachuting over the Rhine river in Germany on March 24, 1945.

Mr. de Vries was a member of the Royal Canadian Legion Highland Creek branch 258's Living History Speakers Bureau; a guide and lecturer on battlefield tours in Normandy; and was an instrumental figure in establishing the Juno Beach Centre.

Amongst so many medals and awards, he was also appointed to the Order of Canada in 2007.

I know his beloved wife, Joanne, is watching us right now from her home today. I ask all members to please join me in recognizing Jan de Vries's remarkable contributions to Canada.

ABILITIES CENTRE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: A dream was realized in Whitby last Saturday when the Abilities Centre finally opened its doors to the community.

After 10 years of hard work, a lot of hope and two years of construction, this amazing facility was completed.

The dream was to create a place where everyone is included and valued and all abilities are celebrated. To that end, over 80 user groups were consulted before construction began, and the building was designed with their needs in mind.

The result is spectacular: a 125,000-square-foot barrier-free sports, recreation and arts facility. It features a field house that contains a track that meets the needs of the International Association of Athletics Federations, three wheelchair basketball courts, plus an art room, a music room, a life skills room and a theatre.

While the physical structure is beautiful, it's what's going to go on inside that's truly wonderful.

The Abilities Centre will be an inclusive and integrated environment that will work with partners like Participation House, the Royal Conservatory of Music, the Royal Ontario Museum, Station Gallery and the Geneva Centre for Autism to create programs that will meet the needs of all members of our community.

Together, we can change the social fabric of our society and make full inclusion a reality.

ANNUAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2011 annual report from the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario entitled Access and Privacy: Ever Vigilant.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012 / *Projet de loi 34, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2012 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BICYCLE MONTH ACT, 2012 LOI DE 2012 SUR LE MOIS DE LA BICYCLETTE

Mr. Schein moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to proclaim the month of June Bicycle Month / *Projet de loi 99, Loi proclamant le mois de juin Mois de la bicyclette.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Speaker. This bill recognizes that June is already Bicycle Month in many municipalities, but in municipalities from Toronto to Timmins, too many cyclists are afraid for their lives and

for the lives and the safety of their friends and family. That's why this bill proclaims that the month of June in each year is Bicycle Month in Ontario, so that we have a provincial lens on this important issue.

ROYAL CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC ACT, 2012

Mr. Sorbara moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr7, An Act respecting The Royal Conservatory of Music.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PORTUGUESE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Hon. Michael Chan: On behalf of the Honourable Charles Sousa, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, it's my pleasure to rise today to make a statement. June is Portuguese History and Heritage Month. This annual observance was proclaimed by this House in 2001. It celebrates the extraordinary contributions of Portuguese Canadians to Ontario's rich multicultural society.

The story of Portuguese Canadians goes back to the era of brave explorers at the end of the 15th century. The great wave of Portuguese immigration began after World War II. That's when many people left Portugal for Canada to find freedom, hope and opportunity. They overcame challenges and thrived in Ontario. The Portuguese community, together with many other cultural groups, helped Ontario succeed.

I'm proud of Ontario's diversity and the people who have enriched this province with history, culture, enterprising spirit and hard work.

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Many Portuguese Canadians have risen to the top of their field, from broadcaster Frank Alvarez to Order of Canada recipient Ana Lopes to hockey star John Tavares and award-winning singer Nelly Furtado.

Ontario is strong, vibrant and prosperous because of the contributions of Portuguese Canadians. On June 10, Portuguese people around the world celebrate Portugal Day. This national day centres not on a battle or a political event but a poet, Luís de Camões. His epic 16th-century poems of exploration, discovery and adventure have kept Portuguese history and culture alive.

I would encourage all members of the House and all Ontarians to join in the festivities around the province. Come and experience the magic of Portuguese culture and celebrate the fabric of our diverse society.

Portuguese Canadians are proud to be Portuguese and Canadian, and we all count ourselves blessed to live in a place where all this is possible: Ontario.

Speaker, obrigado.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I'd like to take this moment to recognize Portuguese history and Heritage Month.

Portuguese History and Heritage Month is a time to reflect on the tremendous contributions that Portuguese Canadians have made to our great province. For over 500 years, people of Portuguese heritage have settled across Canada, bringing with them a diverse slate of skills and contributing to our nation's progress and economic development. Today, Ontario is home to over 250,000 Portuguese Canadians who have established themselves across the province and in areas like Toronto's vibrant Portugal village. And I know that Little Portugal will be as vibrant as ever this summer as they support their team in the Euro 2012 soccer tournament.

This year the Portuguese community will celebrate the 25th anniversary of Portugal Week, a remarkable achievement for the Portuguese community and a testament to the hard work of the Alliance of Portuguese Clubs and Associations of Ontario. But Portuguese History and Heritage Month is a time for all Ontarians to reflect on the Portuguese community's great social and cultural contributions, which have enriched our cultural heritage and strengthened our great province.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am pleased to rise today in the House in response to the minister's statement on Portuguese Heritage Month. As a Portuguese-Canadian woman, it is important for me and my family to see our culture not just be represented but celebrated.

I am proud to be a member of Canada's Portuguese community, along with the nearly 300,000 individuals who claim a Portuguese ethnic origin. Despite our numbers, Canadians of Portuguese background, also referred to as Luso Canadians, have traditionally been under-served and under-represented in the social and political structures of our society. This is why I am so grateful to be one of the very few MPPs of Portuguese descent elected to the Ontario Legislature.

For many years, it has been clear that there was a need for a national organization which could represent our concerns to the various levels of government in Canada and Portugal. With this objective in mind, in March 1993, a group of 250 Luso-Canadian individuals and associations formed the Portuguese-Canadian National Congress and charged it with a mandate to act upon issues relating to the full participation of community members in Canadian society.

While much work has been done, we do have much more to accomplish. The major issues affecting the community include low numbers of Portuguese students entering post-secondary education and a high dropout rate. My community is working hard to address these challenges and to bring our youth to the forefront of our efforts.

When speaking of youth, we must reflect on the loss of our language and culture among our youth. With no national voice, and many youth losing the language of their heritage, we must ask ourselves: What image are we showing our children of strong and engaged Luso-Canadian role models?

In that regard, I am quite pleased to highlight the important work of the Portuguese Club of London. For the past 45 years, they have continued to offer first-class social, cultural and athletic programming to the community. This dynamic organization is also home to the Lira do Divino Espirito Santo, the Holy Spirit Marching Band.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the Portuguese Club of London's president, Joe Teodoro. In taking on the role of president, Joe is following in the footsteps of his father, who held the position before him. I personally want to thank Joe most sincerely for his extraordinary passion and dedication to revitalizing the image and programming in the club and his efforts to engage and empower the voice of Portuguese youth in our community. Joe Teodoro and the Portuguese Club of London are truly gems in the city of London, and I am proud to be a Portuguese Canadian.

The Portuguese Club of London will host their annual Portugal Day celebration on June 8, 9 and 10. I urge everyone to come and dance to our marching band and eat some traditional sardines and chicken while you explore the exhibits featuring the paintings of Portugal artists.

I invite everyone to join us at our celebrations in London or to attend the Portugal celebration in your riding and learn more about our amazing culture and heritage celebrations. Obrigado.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Petitions? The member for Durham.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to see you in the chair, first, but also to present a petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

"Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in homes operating bed and breakfasts in rural Ontario;

"Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

"Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water through years of regular testing;

"Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs to comply with the new requirements of regulation 319/08;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process;

"Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water" system that meets "all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08."

I'm pleased to sign and support it and present it to Rumesa.

CYCLING

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 28% of Ontario adults regularly cycle and over 50% of children cycle either daily or weekly;

"Whereas a cycling fatality occurs every month in Ontario and thousands of cyclists are injured each month;

"Whereas Ontario is lagging behind provinces like British Columbia and Quebec that have invested \$31 million and \$200 million respectively in cycling infrastructure;

"Whereas investing in cycling infrastructure in Ontario will create jobs and benefit the economy, reduce traffic congestion and pollution, protect those sharing the road, encourage active transportation, and improve public health;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario release a comprehensive bicycling strategy for Ontario that facilitates the development of policy and legislation relating to bicycling in Ontario. This policy would include dedicated funding to match municipal investments in cycling infrastructure, education initiatives to raise awareness about the rights and responsibilities of all road users, and a review and update of provincial legislation, including the Highway Traffic Act and Planning Act, to ensure roadways are safe for all users;

"That the strategy set provincial targets and timelines for increasing the number of people who commute by bike and cycle recreationally."

Speaker, I support this petition. I'll affix my name to it and give it to page Andrew.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Grant Crack: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the non-profit organizations (NPOs) of Cumberland village, which include St. Andrew's United

Church, St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church, St. Mark's Anglican Church, Cumberland Lions Club, Cumberland Curling Club [and] Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Centre, request that the small drinking water systems testing requirements for non-profit organizations (NPOs), MOE regulation 413/09, be amended to allow NPOs to have water testing done at existing public laboratories at no cost. Provincially designated private laboratory costs are excessive and prohibitive to Ontario's NPOs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please amend regulation 413/09 as outlined above."

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it and give it to page Alexander.

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INDOOR TANNING EQUIPMENT

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition that was gathered by five students from my riding of Newmarket–Aurora in support of a private member's bill proposed by the member for Nickel Belt for skin cancer. The students are Julia Heos, age 18, of Sacred Heart Catholic High School; Christina Heos, her twin sister; Vanessa Hart, age 18, of Denison high school; Rebecca Hart, age 16, also of Denison; and Catalina Oliveros, age 17, again of Sacred Heart high school in Newmarket. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a growing body of evidence linking tanning bed use to increased cancer risk, the World Health Organization considers tanning beds a group 1 carcinogen, and use of tanning beds before the age of 30 raises one's risk of melanoma by 75%; and

"Whereas many groups, including the Canadian Cancer Society and the Ontario Medical Association, support a ban on the use of indoor tanning equipment by youths under the age of 18; and

"Whereas the provinces of British Columbia and Nova Scotia have passed legislation banning youths from using indoor tanning equipment, and governments around the world are considering similar legislation; and

"Whereas there is broad public support in Ontario for increased regulation of the tanning industry, with 83% supporting a ban on indoor tanning for those under 18;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning youths under the age of 18 from using indoor tanning equipment except in the case of medical need."

Mr. Speaker, there are some 518 signatures here, and I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition as well.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I'm presenting another set of petitions, bringing the grand total up to 4,700 signatures, in support of auto insurance reform. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas auto insurance rates are too high in the province of Ontario and continue to increase;

"Whereas families across the greater Toronto area (GTA) are facing unfair insurance premiums that have more to do with where they live than their accident history or driving ability; and

"Whereas insurance premiums across the GTA differ by as much as 150% for drivers with the same driving record;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly undertake auto insurance reforms that protect consumers, ensuring that premiums are based on a fair assessment of a driver's known ability and history, rather than unfairly targeting drivers on the basis of where they live."

I agree with this petition and will sign it and hand it to page Alexander.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is in serious need of modernization;

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is not in harmony with all the following acts, regulations, guidelines and codes: the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario, the radiation protection regulations of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the safety codes of Health Canada and the radiation protection guidelines of the International Commission on Radiological Protection;

"Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by Reza Moridi, the member from Richmond Hill, that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations, make recommendations on how to modernize this act, and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I fully agree with this petition. I sign it and pass it on to page Annaleise.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It's my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of Teresa Pierre. She's the director of Parents as First Educators.

"Whereas, as an anti-bullying measure, Bill 13 is unnecessary because Ontarians already have Bill 157; and

"Whereas Bill 13 promotes radical revisions to school instruction on sex and gender that a majority of parents do not support; and

"Whereas legislation is not the way to implement equity education (this should rather be addressed by teacher training, after wider parental consultation, in a way which respects the views of people of faith)...."

I will sign my name to the bottom and give it to page Anthonie.

INDOOR TANNING EQUIPMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have hundreds and hundreds of petitions from No Tan is Worth Dying For. Ça me fait plaisir de présenter les pétitions "Se faire bronzer ne vaut le risque de mourir." Hundreds of them come from Newmarket-Aurora, and hundreds more come from Nickel Belt. It reads as follows:

"Whereas there is a growing body of evidence linking tanning bed use to increased cancer risk, the World Health Organization considers tanning beds a group 1 carcinogen, and use of tanning beds before the age of 30 raises one's risk of melanoma," which is skin cancer, "by 75%; and

"Whereas many groups, including the Canadian Cancer Society and the Ontario Medical Association, support a ban on the use of indoor tanning equipment by youths under the age of 18; and

"Whereas the provinces of British Columbia and Nova Scotia have passed legislation banning youths from using indoor tanning equipment, and governments around the world are considering similar legislation"—the government of Quebec actually just passed a law;

"Whereas there is broad public support in Ontario for increased regulation of the tanning industry, with 83% supporting a ban on indoor tanning for those under 18;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning youths under the age of 18 from using indoor tanning equipment except in the case of medical need."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Stavroula to bring it to the Clerk.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction

date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Tameem to the clerks' desk. Thank you.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

We've already killed over 1,000 dogs that didn't do anything wrong. Hopefully, this will prevent it. I'm going to give it to the fabulous page Kyra to deliver to the table. I couldn't agree more.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim McDonell: A petition to the Legislative Assembly through the Honourable Bob Chiarelli, Minister of Transportation:

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.3 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

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"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion a year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Call on the Ontario government to:

"(1) protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually [from] the OLG slots-at-racetracks program.

"(2) direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

I agree with this and will be signing it and handing it off to Dana.

SCHOOL CLOSURE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present petitions on behalf of families and students in the Ruthven and Kingsville area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Education is proposing the closing of Ruthven Public School; and

"Whereas closing Ruthven Public School is premature at this time due to the improved economic conditions that the Ruthven area is currently experiencing; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada census reveals that the town of Kingsville is one of the few municipalities experiencing a positive growth rate over the last five years; and

"Whereas this school closure will negatively impact the future growth of the rural community of Ruthven and Kingsville; and

"Whereas Ruthven Public School is vital to the future well-being of the Kingsville and Ruthven communities and its students;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"As parents, teachers, concerned citizens, we hereby object to the closing of the Ruthven Public School, and appeal to the Minister of Education to keep open and maintain the long-term viability of the Ruthven Public School."

I agree with this petition and I will submit my name and submit it to the Clerk via Sam.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Unfortunately, the time for petitions is up. There are a number of members who didn't get a chance to present petitions, and that speaks to the opportunity for members to abbreviate the text of their petitions so that everybody has a chance to present their petition when they come in.

Mr. Frank Klees: Point of order, if I might.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I did have a petition that I intended to present in opposition to Bill 13, and I realize that I don't have the time to do that, but I want you to know that my intention was to do exactly that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That, unfortunately, is not a point of order, but we appreciate the information.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 POUR DES ÉCOLES TOLÉRANTES

Ms. Broten moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait à l'intimidation et à d'autres questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Debate? I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Seven months ago, when we introduced the Accepting Schools Act, we made it our priority to take a stand against bullying. It was time for government to show Ontarians that we would do everything in our power to make sure all students feel safe and welcome at school.

Le monde est devenu plus complexe, mais certaines questions ne changent jamais : la santé, l'éducation et le bien-être de nos enfants et de nos jeunes. Nous avons besoin que les Ontariennes et les Ontariens sachent que nous continuerons à donner la priorité aux élèves parce que nous savons que lorsque nous investissons dans nos jeunes, nous obtiendrons des bienfaits pendant de nombreuses années à venir.

The world has become a more complex place, but some issues never change: the health, education and well-being of our children and youth. We need Ontarians to know that we'll continue to put students first because we know that when we invest in our young people, we will see the benefits for many, many years to come.

As a ministry, one of the key unrelenting focuses has been on student achievement, and we know that if students don't feel safe at school, they won't do well in school.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to being the Minister of Education, I'm also a mother. It's my role, as a mom of two six-year-old boys that inspire me every day, to keep improving our education system. It means a lot to me that my boys put a huge emphasis on the school community. They're excited to go to school every day to see their friends and their teacher.

But unfortunately, Speaker, it's not like that for every student; it's not like that for far too many students. There are too many students in our schools who, as a result of bullying, don't want to go to school at all. A 2009 study from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health revealed that 29% of Ontario's students reported being bullied at school. That means nearly one in three kids, if not more, have likely experienced some form of bullying. That's a staggering number of young people who have been persistently physically or emotionally teased, taunted or hurt by others.

We know that there are some groups of students who are particularly at risk. A 2011 national climate survey by Egale found that 64% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer students and 61% of students with LGBTQ parents feel unsafe at school. That's nearly two thirds of LGBTQ students suffering from bullying.

We used to be told, "Sticks and stones can break your bones, but words will never hurt me." We know that that's not true. We know that words matter. We know the power of words to create fear and pain and to spread hatred, homophobia, sexism and racism, and we know

that if we can't name it, we can't address it. Speaker, we must address it.

As adults, as educators, as parents, as members of our communities and as a government, we all have a role to play, and we have a responsibility to work together to make sure that our children are safe, respected and accepted at school. We have a responsibility to do more than tell our young people that it gets better. We have a responsibility to make it better, and make it better now.

That's why this legislation and comprehensive action plan to combat bullying is so important. We're saying to students who are bullied, to the bully and to the bystander, "Bullying is something that I take very seriously. Bullying is something that our government takes very seriously. And bullying is something that we all need to take very seriously." It is our collective responsibility to create a positive school climate and an education system where everyone feels welcome and safe.

We have seen the statistics, and we know that safe, inclusive and accepting schools are key to supporting our students to reach their full potential, both in the classroom and beyond.

Research has shown us that rejection and exclusion are associated with behaviour problems in the classroom, lower interest in school, lower student achievement and higher dropout rates. Findings about the effects of rejection and bullying on young people are clear and consistent. These findings also show that students who feel welcome, accepted and connected to school are more likely to succeed academically.

But, more importantly, it is the students I have had the opportunity to meet and get to know who have taught me about the real impact that bullying can have on our young people's lives: stories about feeling alone, afraid or hopeless because of the words or actions of others.

I want to make it clear that I have also heard positive, optimistic, encouraging and uplifting stories from students who, working closely with their principals, teachers and school staff, have accomplished great things together to make their schools safe, welcoming and accepting.

When we first introduced this legislation, we had a goal in mind: to make our schools safe, inclusive and accepting places for all students. As the legislation moved forward, we heard from and listened to numerous individuals, groups and organizations, including members of the opposition, to build on that goal. What we now have is a comprehensive and strong piece of legislation, legislation that will further improve the lives of all students across the province.

I am pleased to say that we have included into our Accepting Schools Act significant portions from the proposed Bill 14, former MPP Elizabeth Witmer's anti-bullying bill. I would like to discuss the elements of Bill 14 that you will now find in the Accepting Schools Act.

We've enhanced our definition of bullying, which incorporates some of the concepts proposed in Bill 14, including that actions impacting a student's property and actions that create a negative environment should also be considered bullying.

We also heard from parents, students and educators that explicit reference of cyberbullying was important, because it is a phenomenon that has the ability to follow students to their homes and continue to attack them wherever they go. The majority of us here never had to deal with cyberbullying when we were growing up, but in today's world our students cannot hide from bullying by leaving the school or staying at home. Today, we need to address the bullying that is happening online, because it is affecting our schools every day.

We cannot ignore the bullying that takes place in online forums and through different kinds of technology. It has a different nature. It can be posted anonymously. It can spread quickly, and it is not always easy to take down or remove.

In addition, we also incorporated from Bill 14 into Bill 13 a requirement that the ministry develop a model bullying prevention and intervention plan and that it be made available to all school boards. Every board will have a bullying prevention and intervention plan, which will be developed in consultation with their school communities and which will be available to the public.

1350

Schools will now be required to have a bullying prevention and intervention plan and to make it publicly available, including posting it on their school website, and boards will be required to provide supports for the victims of bullying, those who engage in bullying and those who witness bullying.

Lastly, we've added an increase in transparency whereby boards will track suspensions and expulsions, including those related to bullying, as per the objective laid out in Bill 14. This is in addition to the requirement in Bill 13 that boards conduct surveys to collect information from students, parents and staff at least once every two years.

When it comes to such an important issue, I was so pleased to be a partner in this kind of collaborative approach. The legislation is stronger now because of the contribution by former MPP Liz Witmer and Bill 14.

In addition to incorporating significant elements of Bill 14 into the Accepting Schools Act, during public committee hearings on the bill we heard from a number of groups, and we listened. We listened to students, teachers, parents, support groups and education and community stakeholders during standing committee hearings. As a result, we made some additional important amendments to the Accepting Schools Act.

Both the government and the third party agreed that it is important to update our description of gender-based discrimination to include transphobia and biphobia. Gender expression and gender identity were also added as factors that should not lead to discrimination, harassment or bullying in our schools. These were important amendments that ensure our legislation is as comprehensive and as inclusive as it should be. I was very pleased that the government supported the members from Toronto-Danforth and Parkdale-High Park in moving these amendments.

We also heard, through the committee process, that there was an opportunity to provide further clarity about the kinds of supports we would provide, so the bill now reflects amendments that add a requirement for boards to support teachers and staff through annual professional development programs. These programs will help educate teachers and other staff about bullying prevention and strategies for promoting positive school climates.

The amended legislation will also require boards to provide programs, interventions and other supports for students who have been bullied, who have witnessed incidents of bullying or who have engaged in bullying.

Boards will have the ability to decide whether social workers, psychologists or other professionals trained in similar fields will provide these programs. We've also added an amendment to the act that will require principals to investigate any situation that has been reported where a student is causing fear or distress—whether physical, psychological, social or academic—to another student, their reputation or their property, or creating a negative environment at school for another student.

After investigating these matters, the principal will be responsible for sharing the results of the investigation with a teacher if the teacher reported the incident, or, where appropriate, with another employee of the board if the employee reported the incident. They will not, however, disclose more personal information than is reasonably necessary for the purpose of communicating the results of the investigation.

Since the introduction of our legislation, I have been pleased to work so closely with our partners from across the province who share our goal of making our schools safe, inclusive and accepting places to learn.

We heard that parents want to know what's happening at their child's school. Parents have an important role in helping to foster and support a positive school climate, preventing bullying and supporting their child's achievement and well-being, and they need to know what's happening in their children's lives. But sometimes students are embarrassed or too afraid to tell their parents that they're being bullied or are bullying others. We took that into consideration and will now require principals who believe that a student has been harmed as a result of bullying, or has engaged in bullying, to notify the parents or guardians.

Parents and guardians will not only be informed of what happened to their child, but will also be invited for a discussion about the supports provided to their child. They will be informed about the nature of any disciplinary measures taken in response to the activity, as well as the supports available for their child, whether their child was the victim or the one who engaged in bullying.

We have also amended Bill 13 to require every board to submit annual reports to the minister regarding suspensions and expulsions. We will post the number of reported suspensions and expulsions on the ministry's website.

We want to strengthen the transparency so that Ontarians can see the progress we are making in helping

to address bullying and making our schools safe, inclusive and accepting places to learn. That is why we will also seek the advice of the accepting schools expert panel with respect to how we should monitor progress in our efforts to combat bullying.

We know and we have heard all along that students play a central role in creating safe, inclusive and accepting schools. We brought in the requirement for boards to support students who want to establish and lead groups or activities that promote a safe and inclusive learning environment, the acceptance of and respect for others, and the creation of a positive school climate. All student-led activities that will make schools safer should be supported, and we know many of our schools are already supporting and working with their students on these efforts.

During committee hearings, we also heard it was important to ensure that students who would like to establish a group like a gay-straight alliance in their school be supported to do so, and we agreed. That's why that provision was already in the Accepting Schools Act. But we also heard that it was important to give students the freedom to call those groups a number of different names, including a gay-straight alliance, and we agree with that, too. That's why we introduced an important amendment that lays out protections and supports for LGBTQ students and makes it clear that homophobic bullying is not okay.

We heard that the current language in our bill wasn't as clear as it could be. We want collaboration, not conflict, between students, teachers and school administration, so the bill, as amended, if passed, would state:

—that neither the board nor the principal shall refuse to allow a pupil to use the name “gay-straight alliance” or a similar name;

—that the name of an activity or organization must be consistent with the promotion of a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils; and

—that all boards shall comply with this section in a way that does not adversely affect any right of a pupil guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

It's not up to us at Queen's Park to tell students how to name their clubs, but it's also not up to schools and school boards to ban students from using the words that matter to them.

We know that some students want to use the name “gay-straight alliance” and others prefer other names like “rainbow club” or “born equal” or the “anti-homophobia alliance.” Key education and community stakeholders, including teachers' federations like the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, CUPE and Egale, support this direction. Most importantly to me, however, we know students support this.

A student from a Toronto-area school was quoted in a Toronto Star article last week, saying, “I have a lot of LGBT friends in my school and I know that they've gotten bullied pretty badly and everything. I wanted to

have a safe positive space for all queer students in the school." It's for those students that we're taking the stand we're taking.

The intent of any student-led groups is to build respect and understanding and create safe, inclusive and accepting school environments for all students.

All of these were important amendments that have helped to make this piece of legislation a comprehensive, direct and aggressive response to end bullying in our schools.

Legislation is important, Speaker, but it's not the only thing we're doing to address bullying in Ontario. We all have a role to play, and we need to work together. We need the whole school and community involved in helping to make our schools safe, inclusive and accepting, and we will continue to collaborate with all of our partners. We all have a responsibility to work together with parents, teachers, students, school board staff and community agencies to make sure that our young people are celebrated for their diversity and not bullied because of it. Through our commitment, we are creating a positive school climate and an education system where everyone feels welcome and safe. This is the commitment that our students need and are calling for, and it is one that we are willing to make.

Evidence on strategies for bullying prevention has shown us that the whole-school approach to students' well-being is the most effective model for reducing bullying and building a positive school climate. The whole-school approach to positive, healthy behaviour requires using multiple strategies and a unifying purpose to reflect a common set of values. It requires that all partners work together to create a caring and safe environment where policies, procedures, interventions and programs are developed and supported at all levels, including boards, schools, classrooms, students, parents, families and the community.

1400

It also involves the development of healthy relationships among students, staff and parents so that they can work together to promote a safe, inclusive and accepting school climate and culture. Adults in the school and in the community need to develop an awareness and understanding of bullying prevention and intervention, and that's why, in addition to the proposed legislation, we announced a comprehensive action plan for accepting schools.

In addition to the Accepting Schools Act, our action plan is bringing mental health support workers into schools.

I've directed Ontario's Curriculum Council to report back on strengthening equity and inclusive education principles and bullying prevention strategies across the curriculum and ways to support this learning in our schools.

We are building toward the creation of a public awareness campaign to remind Ontarians about their role in preventing bullying. We are continuing to support community-based organizations like Kids Help Phone

that provide critical and often life-changing and life-saving support to students.

Lastly, we are establishing an Accepting Schools Expert Panel. The expert panel will be made up of individuals who have experience in areas such as healthy child development, mental health, equity and inclusive education, bullying prevention and intervention. The members, whom I look forward to announcing shortly, will provide advice on the development of resources and practices that focus on a whole-school approach, including bullying prevention and early intervention to support the implementation of our action plan. Very importantly, they will be seeking the advice of parents and students to inform their work.

Si la Loi pour des écoles tolérantes est adoptée, nous ferons un pas géant en avant grâce à elle et grâce au plan d'action connexe, mais le travail de notre gouvernement visant à faire de nos écoles des lieux d'apprentissage sécuritaires, inclusifs et tolérants se poursuit depuis près d'une décennie.

If passed, we will be taking a giant leap forward with the Accepting Schools Act and the parallel action plan, but this government's work to make our schools safe, inclusive and accepting places to learn has been ongoing for almost a decade. When we first came into office, we brought together the Safe Schools Action Team, a team of safety and education experts to look at bullying prevention and review the previous safe schools legislation. In response to their recommendations, we introduced Bill 112, which supported principals in helping them determine the appropriate response to student behaviour. Bill 112 also requires programs for students who have been suspended or expelled. Students who are on long-term suspension or expulsion are now given additional supports to continue their learning and get them back on track.

Following that, we introduced the Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act, Bill 157, the first legislation of its kind in Canada. Among a number of other important changes, Bill 157 also directed school staff who work directly with students to respond to and address inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour, including bullying, when it is safe to do so. In addition, since 2004, we have focused on putting more resources into the system to support our safe schools strategy.

In 2009, we introduced our equity and inclusive education strategy, following extensive consultations with the education community. The strategy is helping educators across the province better identify and address discriminatory biases and systemic barriers to student achievement and well-being.

La Loi pour des écoles tolérantes s'appuie sur l'important travail réfléchi et significatif qui s'est déjà fait dans nos écoles et nos classes pour faire en sorte que chaque élève soit en sécurité et accepté. En travaillant ensemble, nous avons tant accompli, mais il nous reste encore beaucoup à faire pour mettre fin à l'intimidation dans nos écoles. Ensemble, nous y arriverons. J'espère avoir le soutien de tous les membres de l'Assemblée pour

la Loi pour des écoles tolérantes proposée parce que nous réglerons le problème en travaillant ensemble.

The Accepting Schools Act stands on the shoulders of the thoughtful, meaningful and important work that has already been done in our schools and classrooms to make every student safe and accepted. By working together, we have accomplished so much, but we still have much work to do to end bullying in our schools. Together, we will get there.

I ask for the support of all members of this House for the proposed Accepting Schools Act because, by working together, we can and we will make it better for all of our students in every one of our schools across this great province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I call for further debate, I'll remind the House that, pursuant to the order of the House, there are no questions and comments this afternoon with respect to the third reading debate of Bill 13.

I recognize the member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure today to be able to speak about bullying once again before this chamber rises for the summer intercession.

Before I begin, I would like to thank a few people for their dedication. We may not always agree, but there are many people who really believe that we need action on anti-bullying legislation, and they came to Queen's Park, and many of them sit in this chamber.

In particular, I would like to say thank you to those members on the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Although I'm not a member, I was subbed in to that committee during clause-by-clause delegations, and although we may not agree, as I've stated many times, on everything, I must say to my colleagues Peter Tabuns and Cheri DiNovo from the NDP that they were a pleasure to work with. My colleague the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, Bob Delaney, as well as Tracy MacCharles and Dipika Damerla and, finally, Donna Cansfield sat through committee hearings with my colleagues Jane McKenna, Ernie Hardeman and John Yakabuski. A day didn't go by at those hearings that we didn't hear from the public and we didn't hear stories that would take your breath away. Some of those stories, Speaker, I'll recount later today, but I wanted to first start by saying thank you to my colleagues.

Secondly, I'd like to say thank you to the former member for Kitchener—Waterloo, Elizabeth Witmer. I would like to tell a little bit of a story. After the election, I was appointed education critic in the official opposition. Within a few days, I had an email from Elizabeth Witmer letting me know that she had planned on introducing legislation she had been working on for three years. She knew that this was going to be important to me because I had already publicly spoken in my local community newspapers as a result of a high-profile suicide in my community, which I've spoken about several times in this chamber. She pointed that out to me, I would suggest, in late October, very early November. I also received an

email from my colleague from Burlington, Jane McKenna, who has her own long history of confronting bullying with her son. As a brand new member, she had asked if she could put forward anti-bullying legislation.

As a caucus—Speaker, you'll know; history speaks for itself—the Ontario PC caucus chose to move forward with Bill 14. After three years of labour and toiling on the best approach to move forward, the Ontario PC caucus settled on Mrs. Witmer's piece of legislation.

At the time—as we still do believe, Speaker—it was the toughest piece of anti-bullying legislation ever tabled in this Legislature. We believe that it was the cornerstone of protection for all Ontario students.

I mentioned to you about the high-profile suicide in my community. About a week and a half after I was re-elected to this chamber for the third time, one of my long-time friends lost his son. It was a Friday night. I generally wake a little bit early on a Saturday. I've got a seven-year-old, I've got two very yappy dogs, and I've got a cat that all bargain for my attention when I'm home. About 7:30 or 8 o'clock that Saturday morning, I received a very simple email from Allan Hubley, who said that the evening before, he had lost his beautiful boy.

1410

Before that hit the media and became a front-page story across the world, my friend and his wife had to grapple with the reality that not only had their son grappled with mental illness for a very long period of time; he had also been bullied his entire life for a variety of reasons—most recently, of course, because he was openly gay and some kids in his class were homophobic.

I went to Allan and Wendy's house that day. Allan and I both grew up in Nova Scotia. A little thing you do down there is, you love your neighbour and you treat your neighbour the way you would want to be treated yourself. You often bring food. If there's any way to provide warmth or comfort to a friend or family member, that's what you do. I popped by, and my friend and his wife, Wendy, were remarkably strong, very brave—probably in shock—and unlikely to know that not only would Jamie's passing affect them, but it would affect our province.

A lot has been said about how to proceed with anti-bullying, and that's why I was pleased at the time that two pieces of legislation came to the floor of this assembly under the titles of the Accepting Schools Act and the Anti-Bullying Act.

I want to talk about this, Speaker, because until people are actually affected, whether it's your own child or it's someone you know's child, you don't really understand that bullying isn't what it used to be. One of our colleagues wrote an op-ed that, "Sticks and stones may break your bones, but names will never hurt me"—well, we know that's not true. Life today is way different. I like to say that I might be one of the younger members of this assembly, but times have changed, and that's why we have to have this very full discussion.

Getting back to Bill 14, Elizabeth Witmer's bill: I've thought a lot about how we could proceed on this, as

education critic. That's why, as a member of the parliamentary liaison working group, my colleagues Christine Elliott, Jim Wilson and Randy Hillier offered up a solution we felt was the best way to approach this. I believe we started in December, and this culminated at the beginning of March. We had tried to negotiate a way to bring these bills together before people took entrenched positions, so that we could have a bill that people could unite behind, so that there could be one piece of legislation that would protect all kids at all times and ensure that the buck stops somewhere, because if there has been one thing that we have heard in this chamber and at committee and in the public, it is that parents want somebody held accountable for when their child is tormented. That's why we had asked to go to committee immediately before second reading continued on Bill 13.

I needn't remind members that after the one-hour leadoff that we had back in March, Bill 14 came to this chamber for private members' time under the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. I remember that day very clearly. I spoke to the bill. I attended a press conference with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I almost missed the day myself because it was the day that we found out our little Victoria had a brush with her own bully and the school had called. As a side note, I must say, it must have been very difficult for the teacher to make the call to the person who's been on the front page of the newspapers back home talking about anti-bullying.

In this case, it was important that the parents were notified, my husband and I. I am confident that our school took the necessary precautions at our elementary school. They used restorative justice in this particular case. I feel, as a parent, that the situation is now not only under control, but we have moved past that, which brings me to an issue that has bothered me since that day. That was something that we should have talked about: restorative practices.

It led me to conclude that the process which we followed with this particular bill has effectively failed us all. As I mentioned, we had thought it would be better to merge the two bills or to have that discussion earlier on in the process. Failing that, I think we could have opted for something unique, something that has not been done in this chamber for perhaps the last 20 years, and that is to ask a policy-directed field, like a committee on social policy, to study an issue; have meaningful public consultation at the beginning, using the two bills as a basis to move forward; find out what we may have missed; and not confine ourselves to the rigid committee process that we have here.

I think many people's opinions on anti-bullying legislation have evolved over the course of the last nine months. Had meaningful discussions taken place at the very outset, I think we wouldn't be here today dealing with only one bill put forward by the government and rejection of the opposition bill.

I must say that many members of the public feel that their voices were ignored at committee. I sat through five days of public hearings. There were witnesses on the

right, and there were witnesses on the left. But there were nine witnesses—maybe a few more—who I think spoke to us from the middle. But I will say that at standing committee, when we heard from parents, students and anti-bullying coalitions, there was opposition to a great deal of certain sections in Bill 13. Many people felt that legislating the name of one group for anti-bullying over others was divisive and problematic.

As Conservatives, we've always been of the opinion that there needs to be less government intrusion, not more, in the lives of families. We feel that this bill runs counter to that. This bill also goes counter to some of the advice we received from the people whom this government says they want to help; namely, parents whose kids have committed suicide. The bill goes directly against the advice of Mike Urry and Allan Hubley, fathers of two sons who took their own lives as a result of bullying. It goes against the advice of Anthony McLean, an anti-bullying advocate who appears on Dalton McGuinty's website. It also goes against all the advice of the anti-bullying coalitions that appeared before the social policy committee.

I plan on reading a little bit about what they told us very shortly, Speaker, but I think it's important to note that those with credibility who have been working in anti-bullying legislation for many years are quite concerned that if we do not get this right, we will have failed. I can't impress upon you enough, or on this government, that the stakes are very high.

To make matters worse, my colleague Ms. McKenna and I were disappointed, on a number of occasions, that all but one of our Progressive Conservative amendments that would have brought Bill 14 into Bill 13 were rejected by the committee. The measures blocked include the popular and comprehensive definition of bullying that Bill 14 had, as well as the reporting, tracking and investigating protocols parents called for in committee. Even the bill title, from Accepting Schools Act to Anti-Bullying Act, was stopped. That, to us, was quite troubling. As I've said, we had wanted a bill that could be supported throughout our entire province.

As I said, these parents and anti-bullying activists appeared before committee. Many of them feel that their voice has not been heard. Therefore, Speaker, I am going to ensure that it is. Although, in mere hours from now, this bill will pass, I want to make sure that these people have their views adequately on the record.

1420

I'd like to start with Mike Urry. Mike Urry describes himself as the father of a child who killed himself six years ago after being bullied. He came home from school one day and he hung himself in the bedroom closet. Steven was 13. He wasn't gay. He wasn't religious. He wasn't any of the other categories. He was just a kid.

The school did nothing—nothing at all—to the people who tortured him. They weren't suspended. They weren't expelled. They were moved to a different school.

Mike's son, Steven, appeared in the documentary *Bully*. He tells us that over 65% of his 5,000 members

are mothers or grandmothers between the ages of 30 and 55. He was concerned that bullies won't join clubs, so why the focus on clubs was made didn't really ring relevant to him.

He said, "We're talking about kids killing themselves. For every one you hear about in the paper, I can name you four or five other cases of children who have taken their lives that don't make the media because they don't want to talk to the papers." Mike was one of them.

He said to us, "Consider this when you're considering how you're going to write this law. It has to apply to everyone. It has to apply properly. You can't just wish things away by training them to think one way or another. You have to have responsibility and you have to have a response."

Mike said, "The requirement of accountability in Bill 14 will help that. As it now stands, Bill 13 won't improve that situation."

One of the most heartbreaking presentations at committee was Mike's. Let me read to you why, if I may ask every member in this chamber to contemplate what I'm about to read to you.

"We tried everything a parent can do. We talked; we tried getting people's attention. None of it worked—nothing. The last time, the most severe case of bullying in his case, was in a school bathroom. They took a can of AXE body spray and set him on fire. They put the video on YouTube. It's still up there because it can't be taken down once it's spread. I can't tell you what that does to my family."

He didn't see Bill 13—he says it right here—"I don't see Bill 13 changing that."

He does say to us, at the end of his presentation, that his wife will never be the same. She couldn't appear at committee. Her voice couldn't be heard at committee. As much as he brought his own, her voice will never be heard at committee. But her voice is heard here right now.

I've shared the story of Jamie. Now, I'd like to read a little bit about what his father told us at committee: "One of the items in Bill 13 that I like is support for student-led initiatives. However, I feel the proposed language in the bill needs to be modified. I respectfully request that no groups be given special status by being named. To do so will only suggest certain children are more important than others, and I do not support that notion. I am here today to ask you to protect every child...."

He said, "Most of the kids I described above would not be protected by Bill 13, but they would be by Bill 14."

He was speaking, of course, Speaker, of Jamie wanting to start a rainbow club that he wanted all kids to be able to join, "whether they were tall, short, had freckles, an accent, a disability or different-coloured skin...." He found it troublesome that we had to specifically legislate a name. This is from somebody who has walked that long, terrible, terrible walk.

Allan also suggests that—and I'm going to quote him—"Many statistics have been thrown around in this

discussion, but the reality is, without the reporting mechanisms outlined in Bill 14, we do not know how many cases of bullying actually occur. Even with the goodwill of all parties, we do not know where to focus scarce resources, because we don't have the common denominator or trends. We cannot defeat an enemy we can't clearly identify."

This was an important motion put forward by my colleague and I at committee, that we ensure that there were appropriate tracking mechanisms and reporting mechanisms to ensure that the appropriate data was being taken and that it was put into the right hands. That motion was defeated and watered down, and it does appear in a very watered-down version. But we feel, and it's certainly clear in this presentation that Mr. Hubley agrees, that the best way to find out what exactly is going on is to have one source of data.

Many times throughout the committee I heard this report or this statistic or this report. One was Statistics Canada; Toronto District School Board, Egale had something—I'm not sure whose was right, but I can say this: There was an opportunity in this Legislature to ensure that there was data that could have been validated in our schools to ensure that the appropriate level of protection was there for our students. I think that was a missed opportunity, and I think that this is what has made Bill 13 weaker for it.

Another individual who took my breath away—and she relayed this message twice at committee—was Lynne MacIntyre. She was very nervous when she appeared before committee. I want you to remember: The people that stuck out to me weren't the people who were part of a slick advertising crowd or a big lobby group or some activist organization. The people who stuck out to me were the moms and dads who formed grassroots anti-bullying coalitions, who've struggled with this themselves, who've found that there was no accountability and are trying to create a voice for themselves, their children and for other kids like them. Lynne MacIntyre was that type of a person. She didn't come here with speaking points that were going to get in the media. She wasn't media-savvy. In fact, that's what I found most endearing about her. She talked about those kids who had committed suicide or had taken their life by suicide for a variety of reasons, and she talked about her concern that the Liberal legislation would have created a perception of a "hierarchy of targets"—her words, not mine. She said, "My fear is that my son will not be protected, and other children will fall through the cracks."

I'm going to read her story into this record: "After nine years of constant harassment, physical assaults, unbearable torment and even threats on my son's life, he doesn't want to go to school anymore. Instead of learning, he spends his time in class listening to snickering and name-calling, and recently they rolled up pieces of paper and smashed them with a badminton racquet off his face for an entire one-hour class. Not once did the teacher lift his head or notice, and therefore they didn't stop. With multiple paper cuts all over his face, I'm sure it

was" the "most humiliating and ... most painful" experience.

"Every day I get in my car to go to work and I'm frustrated with myself because I spent the last hour begging him to go to school. The whole time I was riddled with grief and guilt because I know I'm sending him back to ... more torment. How can any mother ask their child to go to school to be treated like an animal? I have little confidence that the people who are there to be responsible for his safety will do so. Every day" I ask myself at work "and I wonder, 'What are they going to do to him now?' Every day I wonder when I get home, 'Will I ... have [my] son?'"

She certainly wasn't alone. She did not feel that Bill 13 provided adequate protection to her son's bullying experience. I found it particularly gripping because I think we should all, when we think about this particular presentation, put our feet in her shoes. We should all consider how the system is failing her right now as well, and we should all consider why we should be doing better.

1430

That's why the Ontario PC caucus put forward a motion that would have increased supervision time by teachers, so that there would be that accountability, so that there would be someone who was held accountable if this torment were to continue. That's why I want to say thank you so much to the Guelph Anti-Bullying Coalition, and particularly to Lynne MacIntyre.

One of the more eloquent presentations at our committee came from Karen Sebben. She appeared via telephone and spoke to the whole committee. She says:

"Aggression between our students takes place because adults allow it to. Whether it's a child's parent, their teacher or a school administrator, the job of keeping our youth safe is ours....

"When my youngest was in grade 8, he found himself in a situation where the adults in control were non-reactive or -receptive to a situation that my son found himself at the receiving end of. He was bullied by the same five peers for three ... years. The reason this took place is because at that particular time policy wasn't worth the paper it was written on, policy was interpreted to protect our administrators, and the consequences chosen did not change the negative behaviour of his aggressors."

She said what time and time again all parents have said at this committee: There were no accountability mechanisms built in place prior to, nor are there any built-in accountability measures now. It seems to me, Speaker, if the parents who appeared before committee, who have been up against the wall with their school boards and their schools for years, are telling us we've got a problem, this assembly has got to do some listening, and we didn't. And if we're going to put forward a piece of legislation, we have to do exactly what Karen Sebben said is wrong: The policy must be worth the paper it is written on. Unfortunately, Speaker, what we heard time and again at committee: That is not the case. We need timeless legislation. We need legislation

that will protect all children, and that is what Karen Sebben had asked for.

Now let me read to you a little bit more about what Karen Sebben told us at committee, and a reminder that she is with the York Region Anti-Bullying Coalition, which she is actually the co-chair of and founded with her son, who endured this type of bullying: "My son was not identified as an LGBT youth, yet he was suicidal. What explicit protections will be built into this legislation to protect a child like him? Would a child like him have the same benefits.... Is anyone suggesting that he was not at risk.... he suffered terribly for three years, was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress"—Speaker, kids in our schools are being bullied and they're being diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. That's unbelievable. PTSD is normally reserved for front-line police officers or fire officers or for our military men and women. Can you imagine sending your child into a combat zone just by going to his local school? This is what this parent felt. In fact, she actually said, and let me quote you this, "I'm going to ask if anyone actually knows what it feels like to exist on a daily basis wondering if your child will take his life while you're at work—and what's even worse, as a parent you kept sending him into that battle zone without protection of any kind."

She goes on: "Families like mine in this province are finding each other. This is taking place because so far the system has failed us miserably." She moves on and she says, "We are hard-working, taxpaying citizens who have the absolute right to be heard and not brushed off by our government." And by gosh, Speaker, because she was a supporter of Bill 14 and not Bill 13, she did not have her voice heard at committee. She says, "Without data collection, without record-keeping, without tracking, how can you effectively resolve one particular situation, and, at the same time, how can you track what is working and what is not working?" She thinks Bill 14 was the more superior piece of legislation.

I found her to be quite compelling, and a number of those anti-bullying coalitions I thought wanted to look at this holistically. They wanted to tackle the effects of bullying head on. They weren't really excited about the punitive measures for the bully or the perpetrator; what they wanted instead was to find a way to make it remedial.

We had a couple of great, dynamic people also appear before committee whom I'd like to talk about briefly. Two of them—one I mentioned earlier was Anthony McLean, who appeared on the Premier's blog to talk about anti-bullying. I thought he had some salient points to mention. But also I would like to talk about Stu Schwartz. He is a constituent of mine from Nepean-Carleton on Majic 100.3 FM in the morning. He's also the Ottawa Senators PA announcer. He spoke very eloquently about a number of things, most of which were to support, of course, Bill 14. He makes a great point, Speaker. This is where I think it's not just legislation that we need to effect. We have to have that mental attitude, all of us, throughout the entire province, where we're not going to accept or tolerate people bullying anyone.

One of my friends, Colin McSweeney, will often say this, “We need to be in a place in Ontario today where we were 20 years ago with drinking and driving, where we made it so taboo to talk about or do or discuss that it was the wrong thing to do and people shied away from doing it. It’s a perfect deterrent.”

That’s part of the message from Stu: “No matter how bad you think it is, someone is there to help you. But as we keep hearing, the zero-tolerance policy is not being followed in every school. I’m not sure if it’s a lack of resources, but the problem is getting worse. Kids need to understand that their words can kill.”

He further says, toward the end of his statement, “This is where we need to take bullying. We need to educate kids to get them to a place where they don’t even want to type something hateful online. We have a responsibility as parents, educators and lawmakers to make the future safer for our kids.”

I think everyone hear wants to do that, Speaker. I think we’re going to get into a really dangerous game if we start to say, “Do you know what? You don’t support my bill, so you don’t want to protect kids,” or something like that. That’s pretty illegitimate as an example of where we’re at today. There are members on this side of the House, that side of the House and over here in the NDP who all agree that we need to do something. I’m simply saying that because the way the process was created or followed, it did not allow for people with legitimate concerns and experience in the bullying sphere to actually make deputations that will be followed.

In fact, I think of my friend David Milne, who was one of the leading examples of anti-bullying advocates 10, 20 years ago in Ottawa–Gatineau, somebody who started Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa, CAYFO. It’s a very well-known organization. In fact, the first time I ever met Dalton McGuinty, he was leader of the official opposition and I was still working at the city of Ottawa and we were at the CAYFO Spirit of the Capital Youth Awards because David Milne believed so much in youth. He was blocked from attending committee. He would have had a wonderful ability to provide us with his examples of how to protect children and what works and what doesn’t. I simply submit to you, with the parents that I’ve read into the record and those anti-bullying coalitions, that it just doesn’t seem to be penetrating, and I’m not sure we’re going to be any further ahead on September 1 as we were last December 1, and that’s what concerns me.

I further point out that I’m not alone. I talk about Anthony McLean. Let’s talk about restorative practices again. He starts off by saying, “And I think we’re weaker when we’re separated and we’re stronger when we’re together.

“In some of the schools that I go to, they do a practice called restorative justice, restorative practices. You might have heard of it. This is where, when an aggressor has been bothering somebody, the aggressor will sit down with the victim and they’ll sit down with their parents and the extended school community, and they’ll talk.”

That’s why explicitly my colleague and I put forward an amendment to ensure that we would be talking about restorative practices. That motion was defeated, which was very disappointing. But that was where it came from. It was from one of those first presenters in the first two days who came to committee to say that this is an opportunity for us to proceed and this is how we should move ahead.

1440

Anyway, he also talked about “wear pink day.” I know many members here were here when we made our statements on “wear pink day.” He was wearing pink that day, as was I, actually, and he said, “You might have heard about what happened in Nova Scotia when a boy in grade 9 came to school one day, first day of school, wearing a pink shirt, and two grade 11 students started making fun of him and calling him all these homophobic names because he was wearing pink. They threatened him. They said, ‘Tomorrow when you come to school we’re going to beat you up if you dress in pink.’”

I can imagine that if that was said to me, I probably would have deliberately worn pink. They threatened him.

“The student goes home; he doesn’t know what to do. He’s really worried; really concerned. What he doesn’t know is that two grade 12 students, David Shepherd and Travis Price, heard this happen and they said, ‘No, not at our school. We’re not going to put up with this.’ They got on Facebook—which is often blamed for cyber-bullying but it can be used for good—and they sent a message to all their friends of Facebook telling them what happened, saying, ‘Tomorrow, everybody wear pink. Guys, girls; everyone wear pink.’ They got their cellphones out and sent text messages like these guys are doing over here and said, ‘Hey, everybody: Wear!’” pink.

He says, “This is good. If I was in school, man, you guys would get in trouble right now. The students aren’t allowed to do that when I speak.” I imagine someone must have heckled him; I’m reading the heckling here.

But the point is that they showed up the next day at school, a whole bunch of students wearing pink just like this guy. “The ones that were not wearing pink: These two students would come up to them and say, ‘Hey, would you wear this pink shirt?’ And the students were like, ‘Why?’ They told the story about this grade 9 student who had been bullied for wearing pink. One by one, people put the pink shirt on and they said, ‘We want to make a school where you don’t get singled out for being different. It doesn’t matter what colour shirt you have; it doesn’t matter what colour skin you have; we are one school, we’re one family. Would you wear pink?’ One by one, people said, ‘Yeah, I’ll wear pink too,’ and it spread through the school...”

“Do you know what happened to the two kids that bullied that one kid?

“I don’t know either. We never heard from them again.”

Then he finishes—I was actually really impressed with this presentation—“The Ontario that I see doesn’t put people in boxes. The Ontario that I see is united, and

it begins with our kids. When I read Bill 14, I see inclusive language that will cover and protect all Ontario students, and that's why I support Bill 14."

By talking about inclusive language, my colleague and I further put forward resolutions that would have ensured that the Human Rights Code would have been followed and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms would have been followed. We were told, no, they wouldn't support us. They suggested that in some cases that would be redundant. In other cases, of course, it wasn't, as long as they were putting forward the resolution.

It really bothered us, to the point that my colleague from Burlington was—not to tell a tale out of school, but you were quite emotional. This was your first experience in a committee, particularly through clause-by-clause. I believe you probably came to this House the way I did: quite idealistic, believing that we'll all try to get along.

When we say we want to work together, it actually means we want to work together. It doesn't mean, "We're going to say we're going to work together, we're going to rip the guts out of your bill and we're not going to take any of your amendments, and when it's time to actually support language that is inclusive for everybody, we're not going to follow it."

So what has happened, Speaker? Well, we know, for example, that 80% of the people who appeared before committee opposed the Liberal bill. We know that many people weren't able to appear before committee on both sides; we heard that loud and clear. We know that all of our amendments, with the exception of cyberbullying, were defeated. We know that one minister of that government has already said that this fight is going to end up in the Supreme Court of Canada. It was on the front page of my newspaper, the *Ottawa Citizen*.

So now what has happened—and this is what frustrates me, and I think most of these parents, completely—is that the issue of bullying has now been relegated to some secondary issue as this government and the Catholic education system decide whether or not they're going to be funded or defunded as a result of one of the sections here.

We find that quite troubling. We would have preferred to have something that would stand the test of time and, as some of my colleagues said earlier in many debates, would affect all children.

I remember at a committee—another one of these wonderful deputations that was ignored—listening to Allan Hubley, who said that he would prefer that we fix the language so that we could get anti-bullying legislation in place that would actually affect all children and would withstand the threat of a lawsuit. Now we've got these implications. At one point, actually, when we were going through clause-by-clause, there was probably a scrum or two a day to talk about the implications of Bill 13.

Now, that's one way to go about it. I proposed two others. At the time, I had said very clearly we could have gone early to try and mettle this out like adults. We chose not to do that. My colleague from Whitby—Oshawa was

there and spoke eloquently around that table in the government House leader's office, asking, as we tried to persuade them to do the right thing. The second option, I think came, as a result of—I'll be quite frank; I'm a member of the Legislative Assembly committee and I spend a lot of time with the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk learning about the standing orders and things that they used to do in terms of best practices around this chamber during minority Parliaments, and one of those effective ways to deal with a social problem or an economic problem is that you actually appoint one of the policy-stream committees to deal with a study of the issue, then recommendations and potentially a piece of legislation. Those are two options we could have pursued, and I don't think people would have felt so out of the loop, so ignored, so disaffected. I think that we could have done better.

However, we are where we're at, and I think that there's now an agreement between two of the parties here. Our party has decided that we're going to vote against this legislation. We're going to keep Bill 14, which is now Bill 80, on the order paper, and we're going to continue to have public consultations on our own to make sure that every voice is heard.

But that does not stop all of us in this chamber from ensuring that we do have a tone in our debate that does inform all young people throughout Ontario that bullying is unacceptable. We all have a role to play in making sure that the positive aspects of this debate continue to get out. That means kids shouldn't be bullied based on how they look, based on where they live, based on what their parents do, based on whether they're gay or straight. They shouldn't be bullied based on their ethnicity. It's up to us in this chamber, and to other community leaders, to ensure that we continue to have that discussion. It's up to us to make sure that we make bullying taboo, that it's recognized early on as behaviour that is unacceptable in our province, and in particular in our schools.

Speaker, this has been a very long and emotional debate for so many Ontarians. I don't doubt for one moment that this has been a long and emotional debate for members of this assembly. In particular, I would, again, like to thank a few people; they're probably the same people, but I want to tell you why, not just from social policy. From my chair, I've stood here and I've heard stories of how bullying has affected members here. I had one member from another party, whom I'm quite fond of, tell me that they thought bullying was a normal way of life. We have to fix that. We've had moms talk about their kids. We've had grandparents talk about their experiences. We've had a lot of strength here and a lot of emotion. Just because we disagree on a few items doesn't mean that we can't set the level of debate to be a positive one. I know that it troubles all of us that there have been divisions, and that's why I think many of us have tried very hard to be calm, representative and progressive.

1450

I'll point out something. I've mentioned it a few times. I grew up in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, and you treated

your neighbour like they were your family, because God knows, they were at your house enough. Our community went through a lot of hard times, and you were always supposed to look after your buddy, your neighbour. I don't remember bullying being the way it is, maybe because it was a small town. Maybe some people would say it's worse there. I learned long ago that you don't necessarily need to accept another person's point of view; you need to respect it. And I will tell you, Speaker, that I'm happy to respect my colleagues' point of view but I don't agree with it.

I'll continue to stand up for people I brought into this chamber today. I'll continue to work on this file with a keen interest, as education critic. I know that there are some members in this assembly who have had agreements on process-related issues that could be tinkered with in the future if this ever comes up again.

All in all, here we are, almost at the end of a school year and certainly almost at the end of this legislative session, and the time has come that this bill be put to a vote. So to all of the Ontarians who have expressed their opinion, on the right or the left or simply in between, I want to say thank you. And to the brave parents who came forward to recount their stories, I'll forever be grateful that they shared them and I'll never forget them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, it has been a long, long journey.

Before I go into the substance of my speech, there are a few acknowledgements I need to make: I want to note that Douglas Elliott is here from the GSA Coalition; Stephen Seaborn from the Ontario Federation of Labour; and Rev. Deana Dudley, people who have followed this debate throughout.

I need to thank a few people. Minister Broten, who brought the bill forward, you and I disagree on a variety of things from time to time. You and I notice that we disagree. But when it was important that we agreed, we were able to find common ground. I want to thank you, and I want to thank your political staff who worked hard.

I want to thank Lisa MacLeod, because Lisa, you never let go of this issue. You spoke strongly. You spoke from principle. You and I disagree, as well, in some areas; others, we agree. You would not let this issue just simply fade away. Strangely enough, I also have to thank some of your political staff who took me aside for some wise counsel in this process.

Thank you to my colleague Cheri DiNovo and the political staff from the NDP for the amount of work they put into this. Ms. DiNovo, I'll sit on committee with you any day of the week.

We've said a lot in this chamber, and we've said a lot outside this chamber. We've talked to parents; we've talked to teachers; we've talked to students. We have had to wrestle with some very profound questions about our culture, about our education system, about our own personalities and what it is to be a legislator and what it is to be responsible for a society.

I've listened to many arguments now. I've sat through the committee hearings. I had an opportunity to take in emails and letters from parents—the London Anti-Bullying Coalition; people who had a different perspective from me but who had powerful things to convey about their experience and the experience of their children in the school system.

In the end, you have to work through: What is the principle that guides your actions? I would say that for all of us, whatever we may disagree with on approaches, the central principle is, how do we protect the children for whom we have responsibility? How do we ensure that they are not emotionally scarred? How do we ensure that none lose their lives? How do we ensure that, for them, their experience in school is something that they look back at with fondness rather than with fear?

I had an opportunity in the course of this debate, as I've said, to talk to many people. I was on a few call-in shows. I had people call in and talk about their experience of effectively being persecuted in school when they were young for being gay, and how that affected them and how they carried it with them throughout their lives. Last week, I was on Goldhawk Live with Rob Milligan from the Conservative caucus. A woman called in and talked about her experience as a child, being disabled, going to a school for the disabled, then going into the mainstream and—an experience that seared her for life—on a cold winter day, going home, being pushed into a ditch which she could not physically get out of, while two boys piled snow on her. We know, without any iota of doubt, that there are very cruel, very punishing realities that people face. We have to keep that in mind as we try to find our way through the thicket of ideas and emotions and proposals that lead us to an approach that really will achieve those goals that I outlined.

I urge people who follow this issue to take a look at the transcripts from the committee hearings, because they were very raw. People talked about some of the deepest pain that you can imagine: the loss of a child; the loss of a childhood that is forever frozen in their memories. People came, they spoke, and it was impossible for us not to be moved. It was impossible for us not to feel that action had to be taken.

That doesn't mean that I agree with every solution that was put forward or every fear that was expressed. But certainly, Speaker, it made me, in the course of the debate and the listening, recognize the full weight of what we had in our hands. Bills 13 and 14, the bill brought forward by Minister Broten and the bill brought forward by former MPP Elizabeth Witmer, carried forward by Lisa MacLeod, addressed a number of important aspects of the problem. I said at second reading and I say again today that both bills, having virtues, also have shortcomings, and there are elements that have to be addressed that are entirely outside the framework of the laws that we're dealing with today. I'll enlarge upon that as we go forward, but there is a limit to legislation and a requirement for resources that we, in this House, need to recognize.

This bill requires an investigation of reported incidents of bullying. It requires support for the victims of bullying and for those who engage in bullying, so that they can be moved onto a path that does not cause them to harm other people, and that may address those things that cause them to be bullies. It gives principals the power to suspend or expel, but in the context of trying to move behaviour away from that which is damaging.

1500

Now, in listing those elements, I'm not talking about anything that was particularly controversial in the debate. Most people had common ground on those elements, and most presentations to us didn't differ with them.

Where we came to a difference amongst those who presented and those who listened was the question of allowing students to form their own clubs to advocate for themselves, to build those networks of support and resilience that you need to have when you're in a difficult environment. There were two arguments that were posed against that provision in the bill. I want to address them.

The first is that there should be no hierarchy of bullying and that every child's pain is as valid as the pain of any other child. Frankly, Speaker, I agree with that observation. I disagree with the actions that flow from it, because I believe, and I think it's objectively provable and demonstrable, that some children, based on their gender or their ethnic background or their gender orientation, are subjected to a more profound level of harassment and bullying.

When that is the case, then those children need to have that problem called out, they need validation and they need support. It is not that they deserve more than others. It means they need to be brought up to a level of, I guess I will say, power and recognition so that they are on a common, level playing field with all other children and then can work out their problems.

The second argument that we heard in the course of presentations, that we took from the media and that we've had in debates is that provision of such supports for children who are subjected to bullying, provision of supports for clubs and for being named in the act are divisive or have the potential to be divisive. I have to say, Speaker, that every movement toward greater equality in this society—probably for centuries, but I'll confine it to the last 40 or 50 years—has either been divisive or had risk of causing division.

The fight for women's rights caused, and from time to time still causes, substantial divisions, because those rights are not fully won, even though great steps forward were taken. No one in this House today who benefits from the eroding of those divisions—and men benefit, as women benefit—would say, "We should never have done that. Hey, we need to rethink it. It was good to have male dominance and female second-class citizenship."

We don't think that makes sense. We know what the price of the status quo is. Everyone in this Legislature who has heard these debates and gone to those committee hearings, everyone who is in touch with their community knows the price of the status quo, of prejudice and the

bullying that is supported by that prejudice: wasted lives, emotional scarring, actual loss of life.

It's my belief that people of goodwill can come together and work across those divisions, resolve them, see them as temporary where they do exist and move on. When all is said and done, this society across Ontario will be a richer one for having addressed prejudice, inequality in power and exclusion of some groups from full citizenship in the communities of which they are a part. We will be richer if every child who goes to school feels safe having gone to school.

It was based on that thinking that I approached the bills. It was based on that thinking that I moved the amendment to make it clear that students have the right to use the term GSA or another term that they propose for their clubs. It was on that basis that I supported the government's further amendments to the bill to make it clear that such names had to support an inclusive school, that such clubs weren't going to be forced on anyone, were going to arise out of the needs of students, not out of the wishes or desires of ministers, school boards or principals. Are we going to respect students and encourage them to advocate for a better life? I believe we must. If this bill passes, it will facilitate that. That is a positive good.

Speaker, I should also note I was very pleased to support the amendments moved by the member from Parkdale—High Park, Cheri DiNovo, for protection of the transgendered, transsexuals, and bisexuals. That was a big step forward for this society. The member was supported by the government. The member has spoken on these issues consistently. She has been a pioneer, and she did not step back when the opportunity came to continue to move that agenda forward on this bill.

Speaker, the NDP has listened to proponents, listened to experts, listened to parents, teachers and the general public on the issues of Bills 13 and 14. It was clear to us that Bill 13 produced a strong emphasis on addressing power imbalances and equity issues that often underlie bullying. Bill 14 suggested ways to strengthen accountability to parents and the public. We believe that the amendments that were made to Bill 13, taking some very important pieces from Bill 14—and I want to note those. Cyberbullying: It was the Conservative Party, the opposition, that actually brought forward the most comprehensive definition, and we were very pleased to support the opposition when they moved that amendment in committee. The definition of bullying brought forward by the opposition, by Lisa MacLeod, was a sharper definition in Bill 14 than existed in Bill 13. Ultimately, the Bill 13 definition was amended to reflect that sharper, clearer definition, one that I think will serve principals and school boards well in the years to come.

We worked with the government on our amendments, and the government was willing to work and talk with us. We proposed or supported a number of specific amendments to strengthen Bill 13, not restricting the definition of bullying to only repeated behaviour. This came up in discussions with Queer Ontario, which had some very

useful insights into what really goes on in schools; this came up from the Ontario Principals' Council, and this was recognized by the government in the course of amending the act. It's very important to say that it isn't just a question of repeated behaviour, but a single serious act of bullying can in fact be seen as bullying itself. That would not have been the case with the original definition.

The inclusion of collection of information from parents and guardians in a school through climate surveys to ensure a whole-school approach to creating an inclusive school climate: Speaker, the Minister of Education, the boards of education, the legislators, can't know what's going on unless there are surveys, unless we do collect information, unless we look at the changes in the status of schools over time.

1510

We were very pleased to support amendments making clear the principal's duty to investigate bullying incidents that could lead to suspension or expulsion. One of the things that came forward in the course of the hearings was teachers saying, "We report incidents about bullying, but when the matter is investigated and wrapped up, all we get back is information saying 'Action' or 'No action.'" We worked to support changes that ensured that teachers would be kept informed of what's going on in their classes and informed about the incidents that they took action on, so that they would be brought in far more fully to being part of the team that takes on bullying in a school.

We supported changes that ensured that resources were available for the bullied as well as the bullies, making sure that there were the social, psychological and emotional supports to allow people to recover and to allow people to change; ensuring safe and confidential ways for parents in addition to students to report bullying incidents; requiring the establishment of a model bullying plan by the province; collections and submissions of data on school expulsions and suspensions by school boards to ensure accountability.

Those amendments allow us to say that we have a stronger bill before us today than we did at second reading. I would say that all three parties in the House went into those committee hearings knowing that if we were able to take some of the great strengths in Bill 14 and roll them into Bill 13, indeed we would have better legislation, we would better protect our children, we would in fact make the education experience in Ontario a better one for everyone.

As I had said earlier and as we said at second reading, the bill incorporates some advances, but there are many things that have to be done in Ontario if we want to continue down a road of reducing and, hopefully, someday eliminating bullying in our schools. Right now, we don't believe that there is adequate funding for vulnerable students in our schools. I have raised this question in the House before about a cap on psychological assessments of students who need special-needs education. Speaker, ask yourself: What happens to students who have psychological problems who don't make it

under that cap, who are set aside? How do they cope with an environment where they're facing profound challenges? Do some of them act out? It may be the case. If we want to have safe schools, it's more than simply a law; it's also a question of resources.

We're concerned that there is an excess focus on testing and assessment of the students through EQAO; that too many teachers say to us—and they said it to us in committee and they say it to us personally—"I'm so busy testing students, I don't have time to support them. I don't have time to teach them." I don't think testing and evaluation are a bad thing, but when it gets in the way of actually deploying resources to look after students, then I say that we have made a mistake, that we don't have the balance right. In fact the government, in the course of committee hearings on Bills 13 and 14, was pressed for more and more reporting on incidents of bullying. They made an argument, and one that I found convincing: How much more paperwork do you want people to do? I think the amount of reporting we have is probably, for the moment, the right amount, but we need, again, to move away from putting all our apples into a reporting basket and many more of them into looking after the children themselves.

I've spoken about the schools themselves, but there are the larger questions in the society outside the schools, because the schools are not islands. They reflect the broader culture. They reflect the difficulties, the conflicts, the tensions that flow through the whole society. When those children come to school in the morning, if they come to school hungry, if they come from a family that is riven with crisis, then they are not going to be coming to school in a good mood. They may well come to school profoundly angry. They may be looking for an opportunity to discharge that anger. They may come to school profoundly distressed, not able to interact emotionally with others in a way that's healthy or constructive for them or anyone else. Speaker, if we're going to address the bullying issue, we have to expand our understanding of what's going on in the schools, what's affecting what's going on in the schools, and how we address it.

We know that bullying is prevalent in Ontario's schools. It can compromise school success. It contributes to low self-esteem, depression, delinquency and, as I said earlier, even loss of life through suicide. We in this chamber, I'm sure, all agree that every child has the right to a learning environment that's safe, secure and free from intimidation or bullying. If we want to be effective, we have to reach into the larger community and have adequately resourced student supports and meaningful parent-student-community engagement.

Speaker, in the last few years, the government has brought forward a number of policy initiatives to start addressing some of those issues. It has now taken those policy issues around homophobia and put them forward in law. Requiring school boards to set goals and plans to promote positive school climates and prevent bullying: positive steps. Requiring students who are engaged in

hateful bullying to undergo suspension or expulsion: sensible but inadequate, given what happens to those students when they are pushed out of the school.

We need, Speaker, to look at some of the investments that are required in our schools. According to People for Education, despite investments over the past few years, we face problems with a lack of principals. The role of principals has been expanded by numerous government directives, but fewer schools have principals, according to People for Education. If you have a vital part of the management of a school, a vital player in making sure that a school environment is supportive and productive, missing, you aren't going to have what you need in that school.

Special-needs students at one in three greater Toronto area elementary schools are not getting the recommended level of support. It goes back to my earlier comment, Speaker: If children with difficulty aren't getting support, you are going to have conflict in the classroom and on the playground.

More and more schools are forced to rely on fundraising for the fundamentals of their schools, and that means, increasingly, a two-tier school system in which some students are in fact provided with the resources that they need, and others, in poorer schools, don't get what they deserve. Speaker, those issues have to be addressed if we're going to come to grips with bullying.

One in three schools outside the GTA has 10 or more English-as-a-second-language students but no English-as-a-second-language teacher. Speaker, that means that students are in classrooms where they don't understand what is being taught, where they may not understand what their schoolmates are saying. It puts them at risk of being bullied or of developing a frustration that brings them into conflict with others.

People for Education say that in most high schools, students don't have regular access to psychologists or youth workers. If we want to address the issues that we here know have to be addressed, those resources have to be provided.

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In 2008, the Safe Schools Action Team stressed that the Ministry of Education must provide adequate resources for intervention strategies, and the Falconer report was clear about the resources that schools need: increased supervision of playgrounds and halls, community outreach workers to build links with the community, and support services such as social workers and child youth workers.

Speaker, I think it is clear that with this bill we've taken a step forward on part of the problem that we have to come to grips with in our schools. It is also clear, from looking at the resources our schools have, that there's also a very large piece that is going to have to be addressed if we want the success that everyone in this chamber knows we need.

The course of debate on this bill was not perfect. I would say that all three parties were finding their way through in a fairly unusual situation—typically, we're not

in a minority situation. But I believe that this process, with all its snags and ups and downs, actually showed that when all three parties are willing to talk to each other, find the areas where they can agree and make progress on those areas—I think this bill showed that we can make minority government work. That is not enough for our children, but it is a step forward for them.

I thank you for this opportunity, and I thank all those who were part of making things move forward in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm pleased to follow our minister and my colleagues from Nepean—Carleton and Toronto—Danforth, each of whom has brought heartfelt, sincere and enlightened comments to the concluding part of our debate on a bill that, at times, seemed to bring out some of the worst in us but, as it comes together, is going to show that in many ways it has brought out some of the best in us.

I want to start with just a reflection that if a lot of the generation of our parents today talked to their kids and their kids said, "Mom, Dad, if you were to try to do today some of the things you did in your youth, as either adults or as youth yourselves, what would happen?" Some of those things would land them in trouble. Some of those things would land them—us; I speak as one of that generation, I guess—suspended or in trouble with the law.

But that doesn't even cover the things generations past did that were either, in their time or seen in the context of this time, genuinely dumb or unsafe. That's why times change. That's why so do people.

As individuals, we grow up, we mature in the things we do ourselves and how we treat others. We learn to judge people by the content of their character and the quality of their deeds. In my father's day, people looked at him and thought he was a Mick. His fair skin, his freckles and his Roman Catholic religion stood out in that world of the 1920s. He fought his battles over religion and race. I fought a lot of my battles because I was among the smaller kids in my class, until I caught up to the other kids in my late teens.

As times change and as attitudes evolve, so too do the expectations of our leaders. We, as MPPs, in the course of this debate were handed a challenge. We had a duty to lead. We have to lead the people who elect us away from an attitude that bullying is a way of life or a rite of passage. It is not. Even in our armed forces, the harmful hazing that wrecked so many minds and so many bodies and so many careers has either stopped or been sharply curtailed or circumscribed to what those in authority may consider to be appropriate in the circumstances.

Picking on another human being because you can has never been right and isn't right today. Now it's time to look at ourselves as a society in the mirror and to challenge a piece of what is still inside of many of us. Do we have the courage to change? Do we have the wisdom to put in place measures to help victims, to help bullies

who can change confront the damage and impact of their behaviour, to help families cope with what's happened to them or to cope with how to help someone who does the bullying?

The outcome of these deliberations has combined the government and an opposition bill. This bill also incorporates a lot of the comments and the suggestions made by people who spoke emotionally, who spoke in a manner that was raw and from the heart.

This bill is prescriptive, in that it insists on progress and it does not make bullying optional, nor does the bill allow for a cafeteria-type selection in which you can address some types of bullying but not others.

The bill is controversial in this age because the kind of statement it makes about bullying on the basis of sexual orientation is, in our times, similar to the statements on fairness, acceptance and equality made about gender, race, class or religion in other times.

I'm sometimes reminded of a quote attributed to Mahatma Gandhi as he led India toward independence. Speaking a little bit about his oppressors in his day, he said, "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."

I have to acknowledge the contributions of our colleagues. The former member for Kitchener-Waterloo felt deeply and strongly about the issue of bullying. From the Progressive Conservatives, I also acknowledge the commitment and the devotion to duty of the member from Nepean-Carleton. The member served as the spokesperson for some people and groups, including many from my own Roman Catholic faith with whom I disagree and disagree strongly. Some of the comments that we heard at the committee meetings went beyond the bounds of proper decorum. As much as I disagreed with the content, and I often found the tone and the language inappropriate—and it was often coloured by opinions that were not part of any part of this legislation—I also felt it was important that the deputants who came to see the committee had the opportunity to say what they thought or what they believed.

In the end, it's as much about how we arrive at the consensus, in some important ways, as it is the consensus itself. I think the member from Nepean-Carleton took up a difficult task and carried it through with dignity and with compassion, and for that, I thank her.

I and my party are going to vote for that consensus. I understand that she and her party will vote against it. I also respect that and I accept that. I trust that some of those who spoke against the opposed legislation will draw an example from how Ontario goes forward with this law, should it be enacted by this Legislature.

To say that it's time to change and time to move on acknowledges the contributions made by our colleagues in the New Democratic Party. The members from Toronto-Danforth and Parkdale-High Park in particular challenged the government and challenged our education ministry. They asked us if we were going far enough; if our new policies, rules and laws had sufficient clout to enable them to work. It required our NDP members to compromise, and they did.

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While we often chafe at how difficult it is to advance beyond the status quo in any bureaucracy, it's the task and duty of the civil service to do our wishes as lawmakers and to do it in a just, equitable, affordable and justifiable manner. We all needed to listen to the people who actually make our education system work from day to day. I think everyone came together in circumstances that were more difficult than we thought at the outset, and I believe that we're arriving at a solution at an end point in this legislation, so that when it's done we can look back a few years from now, when people have had an opportunity to see the legislation in action, and say that we came together, we did the right thing, and collectively we can all be proud of it.

It's our obligation to ensure that every student is supported regardless of their race, their culture, their creed, their gender or their sexual orientation. We know that kids can succeed in our schools in a culture of respect and acceptance. This legislation is just one part of our government's comprehensive action plan because we know that bullying is a problem that extends far beyond the reaches of our classroom walls.

A big part of Ontario's comprehensive action plan and the whole-school approach has to do with youth mental health. Our province has invested, so far, in children's mental health about \$257 million over three years so that more than 50,000 Ontario youth and their families are going to have quicker and easier access to the right mental health and addictions support as part of this strategy on bullying. Ontario's aggressive mental health and addictions strategy is going to place mental health workers and expert nurses in schools to benefit more than 9,000 kids.

But there's more to do than that. Our students expect a bit more of us. Our students expect us to address the needs of some of the kids who will suffer bullying in silence. We know that each one of us, as legislators from all parties, and also as parents, as teachers and students, has a duty to work to end bullying in our schools. This legislation and all the members who vote for it, and I say even those who vote against it—this Legislature collectively can say that it stood up for bullied kids everywhere by introducing and hopefully passing a law to require all boards and schools across Ontario to create safe, inclusive and accepting places for all of our students.

Ontario has made its expectations clear that all boards are going to be required to have policies in place on bullying prevention and intervention, to introduce progressive discipline, to introduce equity and inclusive education. We've made it very clear that we're not going to stand by and watch students continue to be bullied.

During the past months, our staff, our members and our minister have had an opportunity to meet with many students who have shared their stories about being bullied, told us about what they were afraid of, told us how they felt alone. Their stories were ones that very clearly affected each and every one of us. A point made

by every party has been that this is not a normal part of growing up.

This legislation says that we have the courage, as a Legislature, to show this part of ourselves to our society and to ask ourselves, "Is this really who we want to be?" In this legislation, what we're saying is that our society will say, "No, this is not how we see ourselves," and we can say, we believe that we can change; we believe that we can do better as Ontarians; we can do better as educators; we can do better as students; we can do better as families. If that's what we're able to accomplish in this legislation, that and specific measures to record how we're doing to be able to measure our progress, to be able to introduce remedial measures, to be able to remove the sources of the problem, then I think that we will have done very well and that we can be proud as a group of legislators, proud as a Legislature, and proud to say that when we pass from this place and have gone on to whatever else follows in life, we can point at our schools and say, "I helped change that."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 13. The standard story of Bill 13 and Bill 14 has to do with two different responses to the problem of bullying. There's obviously some truth to that. Bill 14 is the product of two years of legwork and stakeholder consultation, and it offers parents and school officials a much more substantial set of tools.

Bill 13 has drawn inspiration from those legislative measures but it has not transplanted them. In light of the other parties' decision to vote against 16 of 17 PC amendments, little of Bill 14 has been included in Bill 13. It's more substantial than when it started, but it is still thin. What we've got is, essentially, an ineffective and watered-down version of Bill 14.

There has obviously been heated debate over these two bills, and that debate has generated its own debate outside of the House. That's the standard story of the two bills.

But after going through the process, I see another storyline—a story of two different visions of the way government should operate. Looking at Bill 13 and Bill 14, the committee heard from 90 people over five days of deliberation. That's 90 people who took time out of their lives to be part of the process to make their voice heard. All of them wanted these bills combined into the strongest possible tool to stem the rising tide of bullying. Many were frustrated that the system is broken. They told us how flawed it was. Their experience is that everyone passes the buck—teacher to principal, principal to superintendent, superintendent to board, board to minister, and then all the way back down the line again.

Having experienced this myself when my son was bullied, I felt this too. So their frustration resonated with me. Everyone has a stock answer but no one is accountable. Nobody seems to be capable of taking action around an issue like bullying. Nobody is proactive enough to put an end to behaviour that they know is

wrong. They won't put an end to it, and so we are providing legal incentive for them to do so.

We had an opportunity to serve as a conduit for the will of the people. We were presented with a moment in which we could have proven the ability of a minority government to create something remarkable, to move forward together, but sometimes words like those are just words.

Going into the process, we heard hopeful talk about taking the best of both bills and making something better. In amending Bill 13 and Bill 14 at committee, we had the ability to merge those two bills to create the strongest and most effective legislation possible, and to improve the lives of Ontario's young people in the process. We ultimately chose to do otherwise.

I'm new to this process—about eight months in. I love my job and I work very hard to represent my constituents. I work even harder to stop myself from becoming jaded by the things I see and hear. I'm on the record expressing my disappointment at the way things played out in this committee. True, it was a fantastic learning experience, but I was embarrassed, quite frankly, at how superficial the process was at times, at how it missed the mark. The impression that most of the 90 people left with was that the committee's hearings were simply a checklist themselves, that they weren't really a chance to tap into the ideas of Ontarians; that they served a narrow political agenda rather than serving the public, whose interests we are sworn by an oath to defend. Instead, we got a government agenda. It's hard not to believe that the story's conclusion was written before we even began, and that everything in between was just a courtesy gesture.

Unless you have ever been involved in trying to resolve a bullying situation, you have no idea what it is really like. You can't explain to someone how ineffective the system is until you personally try to find resolution, until you try to seek justice yourself. I can tell you, having had a son go through episodes of intense and cruel bullying, that it is absolutely awful. It is infuriating and demoralizing to come into a situation where your child is being victimized and yet school officials sigh and shrug and point to a maze of red tape, and tell you there's nothing they can do. The parents of the kids are either in denial and on the defensive or they are enabling and rewarding bad behaviour and just pouring gasoline on the fire. And our kids are caught in the middle.

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This bill was a chance for us to come out together. It was a chance to roll up our sleeves and make things right. We could have really addressed what is wrong about the current situation. It is increasingly clear that we must all do our part to create a safe environment for all of Ontario's children—all of Ontario's children.

Writing in today's *Toronto Star*, University of Ottawa Ph.D. student Cecil Chabot names the unintentional consequences of Bill 13. I quote: "Instead of protecting students from prejudice, Bill 13 risks giving implicit legislative support for prejudice against minority, religious and cultural groups.... In forcing the acceptance of

one anti-bullying approach on all schools, it risks ostracizing many who are equally committed to the cause.”

That’s my concern as well. All children, all young people should be able to come and go in a school environment and feel safe to learn and grow. You shouldn’t have to feel that you are placing your child at risk every time you send them off to school.

As a parent, I’ve gone through a couple of intense bullying episodes with my child. I know it is heart-breaking to be in that situation, but even as a parent I don’t have a complete understanding of what it’s like for children and youth who are being savagely bullied every day. I honestly have no idea how kids who are going through these things, who are being tormented daily, find it in themselves to get out of bed, let alone head off to school with the intention of getting the knowledge and grades that can lead to a better life for them.

Our kids are obviously stronger than we know, but they are not invulnerable. We have been wrestling with two anti-bullying bills precisely because our kids have limits. Although they are strong, they do break. Most days, even kids who are bullied can find a reason to keep moving forward. There’s no guarantee that they will always be sustained by that optimism.

We have seen too many young people surrender to despair and take their own lives. These are sorrows beyond measure: Promising young lives cut short by senseless cruelty; tragedies that are all the more tragic because those around them did not see, could not act or chose not to intervene. We know how those decisions are defended: “Everyone gets bullied, so what’s the big deal?” and, “Life is hard and doesn’t get any easier.”

But we can change the world if we choose to. We can, and we must, because if we’re totally honest with ourselves, the issue of bullying is not just something we should expect schools alone to dismantle. It’s obviously convenient to make this a problem for teachers and principals, because then it is nice and tidy. It’s something you can aim legislation at.

But the truth is that bullying is far, far bigger than schools. Our kids spend a good portion of their waking lives in school, but it’s still only a portion. It’s true that teachers and principals do exert a remarkable degree of influence on our young people, but it’s also true that we’ve gone out of our way as parents and government to erode the authority of educators. Students understand the limits of educators’ authority, and they’re bound to test those limits.

Bullying is an issue that is bigger than schools, and it is bigger than government legislation. It is ultimately a question of how we go about changing the attitudes of society, how we go about defusing the resentment and hatred that expresses itself as bullying.

The talk of merging the bills—we heard from Liberal committee members about measures added to Bill 13 that were pretty much lifted from Bill 14, things like the transparency and reporting requirements. Rather than the detailed requirement set out in Bill 14, Bill 13 will generate a thumbnail sketch of bullying behaviour and

then pass that along to the relevant school board, which then passes that information along to the Minister of Education once a year.

Under Bill 13, schools are expected to make their anti-bullying plans public, but the results of those plans will essentially go into a vault. Once a year, school boards send reports on bullying-related suspensions and expulsions, and the Minister of Education has them posted on the minister’s website. Bill 14 would require the minister to step up and outline the steps they have taken during the same time to address bullying in schools. Bill 13 plans to measure the effectiveness of its anti-bullying policies by using anonymous surveys to collect information from students, staff, parents and guardians of students. That will happen at least once every two years, so hopefully, in hindsight, we’ll see the patterns of behaviours that the anti-bullying measures failed to prevent. This is what has been described as “an appropriate but not onerous level of data collection ... and reporting.”

You could also describe it as a compromise, or perhaps a compromised solution. This is the kind of transparency the government believes in: carefully curated. At the end of the day, someone has to be accountable for the progress we are making or the lack thereof. That might be a principal, that might be a school, a superintendent, or it might be a government minister. We have heard again and again in no uncertain terms that this system is missing much-needed accountability.

We have an obligation to those people who have come to us and spoken from their heart and their soul, an obligation to do all we can to ensure transparency and accountability. They know all too well how the system works now: It does not. It’s always somebody else’s fault, always somebody else’s problem. Ontarians would like the assurance that we can do better than the status quo. They would like to know that the buck stops somewhere. We owe them that much.

For me, as a new MPP, the work of seeing legislation through committee has been an eye-opener, and not always in a good way. Sometimes it saddens me, to be perfectly honest. As someone whose family has been repeatedly impacted by bullying, the pain and passion of those people who came here for deputations really resonated with me. I understand all too well their heartbreak and frustration about the lack of accountability within the system. We have a responsibility to make things better. Given an opportunity such as this, we can make the system far more effective, better able to serve the interests of young people and far less deserving of the criticism that it has come by quite honestly, in most cases.

From my own perspective as a mother of a child who was relentlessly bullied to the point that I was forced to change schools, I feel comfortable describing the system as broken. I know first-hand that we can do more. I sincerely hope that we do. But my experiences in committee over the last several weeks have grounded those aspirations in the blunt reality of horse-trader politics.

If you go through the committee Hansard, you’ll read that the amendments allegedly adopted from Bill 14 were

adopted “largely” or “in spirit” or “lifted pretty much.” Those are all ways of saying that they were adopted in part or watered down to the point where they are basically see-through. That’s not the kind of transparency we were aiming for, Mr. Speaker.

In particular, Bill 14 takes a very clear stand on tracking and reporting instances of harassment and bullying, about transparency and about the kind of behaviour that warrants suspension and expulsion. Bill 14 also makes it clear that key officials—boards and ultimately the Minister of Education—should be held accountable for those kinds of activities in our schools. I’m sorry to report that these were unpopular stands. The buck was passed yet again. Where measures were allegedly adopted, they were adopted at reduced strength.

As someone who had taken it on faith that this was a non-partisan issue and that everyone at the table was working to ensure the most substantial possible legislation for our kids, I have to say that Bill 13 has fallen far short of the mark. For the most part, it simply creates the impression of decisive action. I am encouraged by the fact that Bill 14’s cyberbullying provisions were adopted in Bill 13, but I have to say that, for the most part, Bill 13 never met a strong measure that it couldn’t defang.

So, at the end of the day, regrettably, this is not the anti-bullying bill Ontario parents were hoping for. As a newcomer to this hall, I am struck, even in a time of disruption and unease, by how many unique and fantastic opportunities remain open to us, yet our government excels at turning these opportunities into fresh disappointments. Yes, there is still work to be done. Strong legislation that will leave this place and take on a life of its own can’t be crafted alone. Legislation that will play a meaningful role in the lives of all Ontarians can’t be assembled by a handful of people in a closed room. That’s part of why we have committees.

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We heard in committee some concerns related to Bill 13 and the weakening of democracy. This is a bill that critics have suggested shifts power from local school boards and transfers it to government bureaucrats, who can reshape the educational landscape as they see fit, without consultation. We’re already seeing it in school closures and talk of board amalgamations—all of it seemingly sprung on education professionals, not to mention the public, at the last moment.

You can’t blame people for seeing omens everywhere: The government’s green energy strategy was formulated on the back of a napkin in a black box, certainly without consulting the province’s major energy players. Bills and motions in this House can pass with the support of the majority of elected representatives, yet the government chooses to act as if it had never happened.

So yes, I think it’s not just important, but essential to hear the concerns and respect the perspective of Ontarians. Public participation improves the quality of our decisions. That participation is founded on the idea that the voice of the public has value. We are asking for these perspectives not because they validate what we have

planned to do all along; we are asking because members of the public might spotlight a gap in our thinking or point to a missed opportunity to make things better.

It’s also about respect, and I believe respect is repaid in kind. The more often Ontarians have the opportunity to relay their concerns to the province, the more often those concerns are not just heard but are actually listened to, the more likely they are to feel that their government works. Restoring Canadians’ faith in government is the defining challenge of 21st-century politics. That’s especially true in Ontario, a province whose government has spent most of the last decade reeling from scandal to scandal. Ontarians want to believe in better, and we owe it to them to aim to actually make things better, not just good enough. They expected their elected representatives to be true to more than just the politics of convenience.

Again, I’m sorely disappointed by what I see as a missed opportunity to move beyond the same old, same old, and deliver a strong and effective piece of legislation that would make a world of difference for our kids right now, the legislation we all know our kids deserve. Instead, in Bill 13 we’ve got a lot of evasive wording, a lot of qualified suggestions and a kind of selective transparency when it comes to measuring the end result. I think that the legislation in Bill 13 is well-intentioned but weak, and that’s a shame.

There will be other bills before this committee and others. We will get more chances to do the right thing, and when we do, let us look back upon this process and vow to do better. Let us promise to receive input from Ontarians and then actually take the input to heart. Let us use it to make the legislation better and to respect the voices of Ontarians, whom we were elected to serve here.

There are three parties in this House and differing points of views within them. Our platforms vary, but one promise we all have in common is the idea that we are committed to a better future for this and future generations. We must take steps to regain and maintain the trust of all our constituents and communities, because it is only through recapturing the respect and admiration of our citizens that we will restore Ontario to true greatness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is an honour indeed to stand up and say a few words on third reading of this bill. I want to preface my remarks by talking about how at the beginning of the bill, I remember standing up and saying a few words on that very first day when it was being introduced into the House. I remember that there was at that time, I think, some animosity. We had just come back from the election, there was a minority government and there were some bruised feelings all around.

I remember quite vividly when Mrs. Witmer, the former member from Kitchener–Waterloo, stood up. She was trying to introduce her bill, and there was some debate going back and forth about which was the better: Was it Bill 13, which was the government bill, or was it Bill 14, which was Mrs. Witmer’s? I remember speaking on that day that it behooved all of us to take those bills

and to build them, to take the best parts of both bills, and that as a minority government we needed to work together.

You know, I heard the last speaker. I heard what the member from Burlington had to say. I think the disappointment she has—and she has admitted she's a rookie member now of some eight months—in that the process did not work entirely to her liking.

I would like to tell her, though, that the process, as flawed as it was around this bill, and perhaps as truncated as it was in terms of allowing people to speak or come forward and be heard, certainly is better, in my estimation, than any of the times I've had over the past 11 years, because up until this point I have always been here in a majority government. When I arrived, it was a majority Conservative government and then two majority Liberal governments. I just want to tell her and other people who may have been watching this that any compromises that have been made in this bill and other bills around here today are legendary in comparison to what happened in all of those other years.

I have never forgotten my very, I think, first, second or maybe third month here. Coming from a municipal background, having been a mayor in East York, having known a great deal about the Municipal Act, my first bill that I had to do something in committee on was the Municipal Act. It was about 1,000 pages long. I thought it was a great bill. It was a Conservative-inspired bill. I thought it was legendary in preference to what had existed up to that point.

But I did see 11 or 12 points in 1,000 pages that I thought could be improved. I went to committee as a rookie and I put down my amendments and I sat there full of hope and expectation that I would be listened to. I remember that my first amendment went down in flames. My second amendment went down in flames. My third amendment went down in flames. My fourth amendment went down in flames. And I was starting to wonder, "What is the matter with this place?" Then my fifth amendment came forward. The parliamentary assistant at that time was Morley Kells, member from Etobicoke. He was the parliamentary assistant. I will never forget his words as long as I live. He sat there. He looked at it. He said, "This is a wonderful amendment. This makes a lot of sense. I really like this a lot. Too bad it's not ours. We're voting against." And I never forgot that. I never forgot that, because that's the way politics was done around here.

So when we have a bill like this one where there are some small compromises, when some of the opposition's amendments are adopted, when people who sit on the other side of the House are actually listened to, and where there is a bit of give and take, I am hopeful. I wish that this was the case all the time, not just in minority governments but in all governments, because in my view it would work a whole lot better.

You know, I have watched the people who have come forward. I was not a member of the committee, but one need only look at the parliamentary channel if you're in

your office, wander into the committee for a few minutes, see the demonstrations outside, read what is being reported in the newspapers and on television, to see that there was a great deal of division within this society about where this bill should be going. There were those who genuinely supported the bill and then there were those who did not.

But I want to say that my own gut reaction through all of this, that although there were many people who did not support the bill, the overwhelming majority of young people did. There was no one with whom I spoke or who contacted me under the age of 25 who did not support what this bill was trying to do. They are the students who are in high school; they are the students who are in university. I had an email from a young man who was in university and felt that he was being bullied, and he wondered why this was just being placed around high schools and possibly elementary schools. Young people get it, and they don't like it. It is especially those young people who are asking us to change. They are living the life. They are seeing the bullying each and every day. They see the damage that is done to them, to the people that they know, to their friends, to those that they love, and they want something to be done.

1600

Schools have changed a lot. I listened to some of the other speakers. Schools are legendarily different from when I was a boy. My God, I go into the schools today and I wish that I had gone to a school like that. I wish that there would have been an opportunity to learn the things that these kids are learning in the schools today. I wish that I could have felt as casual. We were all deferential. When the principal walked down the hall, you ran away lest your shirt was untucked. I remember, if your shirt was untucked, that was three days of detention. If you wore jeans, you were suspended. I remember people getting suspended for wearing jeans to school.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I've just been reminded that a young woman who would show up to school in pants would be sent home. If they didn't like the length of your hair, they would order you out to get a haircut and say, "Don't come back till you get one." This is what I remember. If you went up the staircase and that was the down staircase, that was a week's detention. I'm seeing some people shaking their heads, because those are the schools we went to.

The schools today are a whole lot better. I walk into the schools today and the students are accepting of people's differences. They are more casual. I even see the teachers wearing jeans, which I was forbidden to wear, and T-shirts. They're much, much better. But they still have the problem of bullying and they need to deal with it. The old solutions, the students have told us and the teachers have told us, don't work. They're looking for a new solution.

There was a quote I found here that I'd like to read into the record because I think it says it all about why we need to have this brand new approach. The Review of the

Roots of Youth Violence, "Executive Summary," Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2008, on page 6, made the following statement that I'd like to read because it is absolutely essential to why we have to support this bill:

"Making headway on issues of safety involves abandoning the failed philosophy of addressing safety through discipline/enforcement mechanisms. It does not work. While there will always be a place for discipline in identifying standards of behaviour, the reality that has thus far not been accepted in the system is that marginalized youth cannot be punished/suspended into becoming engaged....

"Hope needs to be restored through programs and initiatives that create prospects for success for youth who are currently on the outside looking in."

Mr. Speaker, this is what I'm hoping this bill is going to accomplish, at least in part.

When I go into the schools today, I am amazed by the talent, by what young people are learning, what they're experiencing. I went to East York Collegiate a couple of weeks ago to see a wonderful production of the play *Legally Blonde*. It was done brilliantly. It was hard for me to believe that the cast of characters were in grades 9, 10 and 11—unbelievable, what they were able to accomplish. I see the sports that happen in that school, the charities that they raise funds for—all of the things that we never did when I went to school. We learned by rote. We learned dead languages like Latin. We learned by rote and we were afraid all the time. I go to Malvern Collegiate and I look at that wonderful school, which is in the Beach, and I look at the community action that the young people undertake. They're not afraid to go out and demonstrate. They're not afraid to come down here to Queen's Park and tell us we're wrong when we're trying to close down their pool—something I don't think anyone at my school would have ever done—and how they can turn around and do massive fundraisings when some vandals came and destroyed the statue that was put up on the grounds following the First World War. They raised the funds, the students themselves and the alumni, to restore it—absolutely incredible.

But those students are very blunt when I go into the schools and I talk to them about politics and about being a politician. They're very blunt about bullying. They tell us that it exists; they tell us they don't like it. They are hoping we can do something to help them. They are much more self-assured. They are self-assured because they have a different identity than the identity that I think some of us of an older generation had when we went to school.

I went to school pretty much in a monoculture, right here in Toronto. I knew one black kid—a great baseball player, his name was Chapman; we all wanted him on the team—but he was the only one. You know, we had some people whose family originally came from China and a couple whose family originally came from Japan, but it was a monoculture. But today when I go into the schools, they're all multicultural, at least the ones here in Toronto. They have a diversity and a knowledge that they have to

be accepting of each other, which we never had before. They have a religious diversity which goes across all religions and of none. They have a diversity and an acceptance when it comes to matters of sex.

Let me tell you, that's a big bugaboo for people in an older generation. I know from many of the people who came down to make deputation, the hot point and the flashpoint was all around sexual orientation, was all around gay-straight alliances, was all around things that still horrify some of an older generation. Well, I want to tell you that young people are not horrified to talk about that or to accept it or to see that somebody is different from them. They are certainly not of a calibre that some older people are or were.

Back to Bill 13: Bill 13, in my view, is creating a safer, more accepting school. It is making sure, through some of the amendments that we passed, that there are bullying awareness weeks. It makes sure that school boards promote equity. It makes sure that there are suspensions and expulsions for repeat offenders, and that codes of conduct are adhered to.

My belief is that the committee has done absolutely excellent work in very trying and difficult circumstances. It is my belief that the committee structure in a minority government is a far better committee structure than would ever exist in a majority situation, where one party makes all the rules, one party has the majority of votes and one party always prevails. These were difficult circumstances, but the people from all three parties seemed to have melded the two bills, not always as successfully as some may have wanted, but it is my belief that the basic ideas that Elizabeth Witmer pronounced so strongly in this Legislature at the time when she introduced Bill 14 have been carried through. I would implore the Progressive Conservatives to look at that. Elizabeth Witmer was a powerful and a decent force in this Legislature. She believed things very strongly. She was willing to work very hard in order to accomplish her goals. One of the key goals she wanted to accomplish was to end bullying. Those parts of her bill that have been subsumed into Bill 13 may not have been exactly as she worded them, but I believe that the heart and the spirit are contained within the final compromise.

1610

I believe that the deputations and the people who came to make those deputations were heard. I'm not sure that everyone is going to like what has happened here today, because it is difficult for some people to accept that change must come. It's difficult for some people not to look back to their high school days and think that everything was rosy and wonderful.

I talk to people—I was at a reunion for my university, the University of Toronto; I went there on Sunday. I met with some people, and they were talking about the university which we all love—that's why I went back to the reunion—and I met a guy who came from the first high school that I attended. I don't want to name it because I would only be disparaging of that high school. He said, "Have you ever been back to the reunion of the

high school?" And I told him, "No. I have no fond memories of the place. I have no fond memories of my first high school." He was shocked. He said it was a wonderful place, because he played on the basketball team; he was part of some of the student groups.

I didn't want to tell him that he grew up in a very different place from me, because when I went to school there, I was a kid from Regent Park. I was one of only two. Almost everybody who went to the school came from Rosedale and had lots of money. I never forgot that: their nice clothes, the chauffeur who drove some of them to school, their 16th birthday when they got a brand new Mustang; that was the life, and to be part of that—I was never part of that school. Was I bullied? I don't think so. But do I have fond memories of it? No. So it's easy for me to understand why someone who feels bullied has no fond memories. When I hear the horrendous story of the disabled woman kicked into a ditch and two guys tried to throw snow on her, that is not unusual. We have to make sure that—I hope it is unusual; I'd better preface that. It is unusual, but it is not unique and alone. I'm sure there are other horrific stories like this, too.

In the end, we have to make sure the schools are accepting. In the end, we have to make sure that every student, whether they're rich or poor, whether they were born in Canada or not born in Canada, whether they're gay or straight, whether they belong to one religion or another—it doesn't matter; they all have to feel that they belong there. That's what I'm hoping the bill will accomplish.

The amendments that were made are lengthy. There's a whole bunch of them here that are lengthy. They were good amendments. First and foremost, the one that's made all the press, the reference to sexuality, homophobia, transphobia, has been set straight and in the record. The gay-straight alliances are now part of the bill. That is, if any students want to call it what they want to call it, they can do it. I think that this took considerable courage from the members of the committee to come forward with this because there are forces in this society that want to micromanage in the schools. They are people who think that because it's always been a different way, that that's the way it should be now. I am saying, "No." I have enormous respect and trust for young people to do what is right. They live in a different world than the one in which I grew up, and they are developing a better society than the one I grew up in. Certainly, I am hoping to assist them in any way I can to make sure that it's a better world for them than it was for us all those years ago.

We also know that this bill and the amendments have empowered students and student voices. That's an important thing that has to take place as well. It's no longer the authority of the principal or the guidance counsellor or the teacher who is in charge, but I think students have to be given some of that role and some of that responsibility themselves.

For Bill 14, that portion which has been subsumed into this bill and which is necessary, we have the expanding

definition of social and academic harm; we have an inclusion of cyberbullying, because, even though I cannot claim to be any great whiz on the computer, I do know its powerful influence and how cyberbullying has affected so many young people because it's instantaneous. It can spread viral, and all kinds of harm can be done in a way that simply calling someone a name in the schoolyard could never do, because now, hundreds of your friends and colleagues, even people you don't know, will instantaneously know something about you that is spread in a malicious and often false way.

I'm glad there's something in the bill that has an inclusion for parents and guardians to be part of the in-school climate surveys. It's important that they are consulted. I'm glad that, in the bill, there is a clear principal's authority to investigate bullying that will lead to suspensions or expulsions in the most severe cases.

I'm glad that the bill has now included a provision of notification to parents of victims and of bullies, because this needs to be passed down. Not only do we have to protect the children, but we have to let their parents and the children themselves know that this is not acceptable so that they, too, can have a role in stopping this behaviour.

We need to know that there are resources for witnesses, and that's been contained, that there is ensured safety and confidentiality of parents and children to report.

I'm going to conclude by saying that the time has come to go forward. The time for debate is done. The time for action is now.

We have listened, and I have listened, not only in this Parliament but in the one before when the issue of bullying came up again and again. At that point, it was not possible to deal with it. Whether it was time or political will, whether it was that the issue had not matured to the point or whether there was a societal impact trying to prevent it, to slow it down or discuss it further, I don't know. But I do know that, in the interim, more children have died. More children have taken their own lives, which is one of the saddest things you can possibly consider.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come to go forward. The time to debate is almost up. I know my colleagues have a few more things to say, and we have another hour or two. But at the end of that, it's time to take action.

In conclusion, I would only ask that if and when this bill passes, everybody takes the time to make sure there are resources put into the schools. That means additional monies, resources in terms of teachers, psychologists, psychiatrists and those people who are necessary to make sure that bullying can stop and help to identify it.

I would ask that everyone ensure that there is social and emotional development. It's more important that the teachers concentrate on this. As my colleague from Toronto-Danforth said, spending time on EQAO tests—if you're going to take the \$51 million from EQAO that is spent each and every year, please take the \$51 million and spend it where it will actually do some good, and that is with our young people.

Last but not least, please look at the other systemic issues that will continue in terms of potential bullying. Whether it's poverty, if it's racism, if it's inequity or inequality, if it's just gender, take a look at how all of those can be resolved and move to end them. In the end, our schools will be better, our society will be better and we, as Ontarians, will all be richer.

I implore everyone to think about what is contained in the bill, and even if my colleagues in the Conservative Party, the official opposition, are not happy that they were not totally heard throughout this bill, enough has been accomplished here and more has been accomplished in coming to the end of this bill than in almost any bill I can remember in my 11 years in this House. Please, everyone, for the sake of the kids, vote yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Michael Coteau: I stand here before you today not only as the MPP for the beautiful riding of Don Valley East but also as a former school board trustee and the father of two young girls. I've had the opportunity to think a lot about Bill 13, and my experience as a parent and as a trustee have only strengthened my position on the bill. I fully support it, and I think it's the right thing to do. I want my daughters to be able to go to school without having to worry about being bullied so that they can learn well and reap the benefits of this great province. I want all kids to have an opportunity. Right now, unfortunately, there are many young people in our system who don't have the opportunity because of fear.

1620

We were all young once, and we all have examples of students who are subject to bullying. I have vivid memories of students being bullied. In fact, when I was a young man in elementary school, I was bullied myself. I also remember back then that many bullies got away with physical and psychological tormenting of their victims because there was no legislation there to protect them. In those days—and, I may add, it wasn't that long ago—if someone were gay, black, Asian, the notion that some day legislation would be there to protect them from bullying and would allow bullies to feel the real repercussions of their actions would simply be fantasy.

We are never going to completely eliminate bullying—I think we all know that—but we're trying, and we're certainly here to make a difference and to reduce it. This bill contains elements that will help us track this progress. In fact, the Minister of Education earlier was saying that we've added transparency, where boards can track suspension and expulsion rates, including those related to bullying, as laid out in Bill 14.

As we all know, there have been some really high-profile cases of young Canadians who were bullied to the point where they took their lives. This shouldn't happen in our country; it shouldn't happen in this great province. All students, regardless of their race, gender, religion or sexual orientation, deserve to be in a learning environment that's safe.

As a former school board trustee, I've been asked to intervene many, many times—dozens of times—by

families who have gone through a bullying process with their children, and I'll tell you, it's a hard thing to go through. The families have to put up with mental and physical harassment from other students to their children. I'll tell you that Bill 13 will help us stop some of this. I'm often saddened when I sit in a room with a parent and a child and the principal—I remember as a school board trustee—and they tell me the story of what's happened to that child. It not only affects that child but it affects the siblings; it affects the grandparents; it affects the entire family. I'll tell you, there's nothing worse than when a young child who is full of life and vibrant comes home and slowly starts to isolate himself; they start to withdraw from the world around them, and eventually it leads into depression. You know, as a parent of two young girls, I'll tell you that's something I would never want to have experienced myself.

I know this bill has its critics, and some have raised flags and incorrectly argued that this bill infringes on religious freedoms. On the contrary, I think if people really read all of the sections of the bill, they would find that it actually protects students from being bullied based on religious grounds. I am proud of our government's steps in regard to this bill. They're leading by example and working to get a bill passed that will make schools safer for our children and grandchildren and benefit everyone in our province. Bill 13 continues our strong record of making schools safer.

I was a school board trustee for many years, in fact for just over eight years, and I've seen this government in action. Since 2004, this government has invested almost \$300 million into safe schools in this province. It's come with a lot of good results, including 25,000 teachers being trained in anti-bullying strategies; 7,500 principals being trained on how to deal with bullying.

I remember a few years ago at the Toronto District School Board we had a big push for the Kids Help line, which we fund, as a government, \$1 million per year. Since it started a few years ago, over 50,000 young children have called that line and received some help. Some 3,100 schools were provided with software that provided Internet safety for grades 7 and 8. There have been 2,500 additional psychologists, social and child youth workers, attendance counsellors, lunchroom supervisors and bus supervisors added. So I think that, overall, the safe school strategies that have been implemented at boards right across this province have been very positive, but we all realize there's a lot more work for us to do.

We are leading by example, and Bill 13 is a huge step forward in working to make sure that our schools are the safest in the world. I'm proud of how we are working together with opposition members to craft a bill that delivers for students and parents, for families in this great province. The committee has done some great work to make this bill even stronger, and some of the features of Mrs. Witmer's Bill 14 have been incorporated into the bill. I think we should all be proud of that.

The committee should be proud of its work, and we have a bill that is going to be an example not only for this

province and the people who live in this province, but I think for the entire country. I think people are going to look at Ontario as being a province that has taken a step in the right direction to help protect young people in our schools.

In my riding of Don Valley East, I have received a lot of phone calls on Bill 13. I'll tell you that overall there has been overwhelming support to move forward on this bill. Of course, some people have expressed concern, but overall, there has been strong support.

I just want to conclude by saying that at the end of the day, when we look back maybe 10 years, 20 years from now—people in the opposition, people who opposed the bill—we'll come to the realization that this was the right thing to do at the right time. I'm here to support Bill 13, and I'd like to thank everyone who helped move this forward, especially the Minister of Education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure and a privilege to rise. I know it's a little late in the afternoon—we're getting a little sleepy—so I'll do my best to wake everybody up.

Number one, let me say something pretty dramatic: What this bill is about is nothing less than life and death. That's what it's about. It's about life and death. It's not about nice after-school clubs. It's not about religious freedoms. It's not about anything else but that at its hub. That's why we heard passionate deputations on all sides. That's why you hear passionate discussion in this House.

Let me reiterate some pretty galling statistics: 60% of LGBT students are harassed and bullied. What they are subjected to, if they were not in a school, would often be considered assault, criminal assault, in the outside world. LGBT students are much more likely to commit suicide or attempt suicide than any other group of high school students. The stats vary on that, but we can pretty safely say between two and four times as many. So this isn't just any other group of students; this is a high-risk group of students whose lives are at risk and are being put at risk.

This bill and all that we did, all parties that came together over this bill, was for them. I want to tell you that it's from them, too. It's not just for them, but it is of them. We heard from some incredibly brave students. We heard from students who want to start gay-straight alliances in Catholic schools and have been refused that ability. And that is, by the way, their charter right. Charter rights have not been mentioned this afternoon, so I'm going to mention them. It's their charter right—freedom of assembly—to start a group and name it what they will—within reason, obviously.

These students wanted to name their groups gay-straight alliances, and they wanted to have them in Catholic schools, because they're Catholic students and because they love their schools and want to make their schools safer. That's why. And they want to call them gay-straight alliances because "gay" is the elephant in the room. The very fact that some schools don't want to say

the word or have the word as a name of the group is the problem, Mr. Speaker. That's the problem. That's why they get harassed. That's why they get bullied: because "gay" is not an acceptable word. Well, I believe that we, all of us here, want to make it an acceptable word. There's nothing negative about that word, but we know that that word could have negative consequences. So there is that. For example, when we introduced amendments from the New Democratic Party to put trans language into the bill, we know that trans students are the most beleaguered, the most at risk—trans adults, even. Fifty per cent of trans folk have attempted suicide—50%; 50% live in poverty. We're talking about an at-risk group, a series of students whose lives are in danger. That's the significance of what we're doing this afternoon. It couldn't be more significant.

1630

I want to tell you also about the real Ontario, because it's not what we heard enough of in the deputations. We heard some deputations—and I'm not going to use flowery language. We heard some deputations that, if they had said the same things that they were saying about LGBT people about people of colour or about any racialized group, we would have had to turn the mike off and we would have had to charge them with a hate crime. Those are the kinds of deputations we heard, and that's also the reason why we need gay-straight alliances and the kids' freedom be able to call their clubs that: because we know homophobia is real; it's very real. And it was demonstrated as real at the hearings—there is no question. We heard the move to allow gay-straight alliances compared to residential schools. My goodness. We heard them called "sex clubs." We heard all manner of smear against LGBT people in those deputations. It's unacceptable. It puts our children at risk.

We also, to be fair, heard some amazing testimony. I want to give an incredible big, large shout-out to the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, of which we have one here in the House, because I have to say that the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association voted overwhelmingly—some say 90%—in favour of Bill 13. That is a brave stand, but I would argue even further: It's a Christian stand; it's a Catholic stand. "Catholic" means "universal," by the way; it means universal. It was a universal, Christian stand. That's what the teachers did. The teachers know, because they work with the students. They see the bullying happen. And they stood with their students in a very brave move. They also came and testified to us. So they, teachers and students—those two groups are the groups we should be listening to. Those are the groups who have the first-hand experience.

Yes, and parents too. Let me tell you about some parents I know. Let me tell you about the mothers of our children, as I call them, the mothers of my husband's biological children. One is a United Church minister and one is a tenure-track—actually, she's tenured now—university professor. Their daughters are six and eight; they are our daughters, too. They will grow up, I hope, in a school system that sees two mothers—or two fathers,

for that matter—as just as normal a family grouping as a male and a female. In fact, there's all sorts of different kinds of family groupings that send their children to school. There's lots of single mothers, too; I was one of them at one point. We want all of those children to be able to experience an education that is inclusive and that is welcoming.

So there is a family and there are two parents, and those two parents want to ensure the safety of their and our children. They're parents, too. We heard them. Finally, we heard them in Ottawa. We heard some wonderful women who came with their babies, some of them even nursing their babies; women from all sorts of faith backgrounds who came and deputed before us. It was a welcome change from some of the testimony that we heard.

I want to thank—yes, absolutely—my Conservative colleagues for the work that went into Bill 14 and then became part of Bill 13—the work on the bullying definition, the work on the reporting, the work on cyber-bullying and the work on building a model of bullying prevention. All of that is good and all of that is in Bill 13—all of that.

What is not in Bill 13? This is just to counter, again, some misconceptions. Nobody at no school in Ontario is forced to have a gay-straight alliance, but if the children want an association and they want to call it that, yes, it is their right; it is their charter right as well as their right in Bill 13.

There is no imposition on religious groups who want to use school property. They can still use the school property. Again, it's their charter right. Again, that's also a protection for them.

There is no threat whatsoever to Catholic education. In fact, as I said, Catholic teachers voted overwhelmingly in favour of this bill.

And it's not just for LGBT students; it's for all students. No matter why they're being bullied, this bill is to protect all bullied students—and the bullies too, who also need attention, who also need help. We heard from a youth advocate who's wonderful on that topic, who said we cannot just expel those students. We have to work with those students to make sure that they can become reintegrated.

Gay-straight alliances, by the way, are, as the name implies, also for straight students. They're not just for one small group. They're for those who want to see a homophobia-free environment and a bully-free environment in their schools. So it's for all of those.

And why is it important that students be allowed to name them that? Well, studies have shown that if they call them anything less, anything that doesn't say the word or a word, that isn't specific about what we're talking about, which is the bullying of LGBT students, it's not as protective. Studies have shown that if it's just a general name, those children who are most at risk—remember, most at risk of suicide, most at risk of attempted suicide, most at risk of being bullied—that those students are not as protected unless they see them-

selves reflected in the name of their support group. That's why these names are important. To go back to point number one, they save lives.

We have a reverend here, and she will know what I'm about to say next. It's common knowledge. There is nothing anti-Christian about a gay-straight alliance. I speak as a United Church minister, a clergyperson, as well as a politician. Jesus said absolutely nothing about homosexuality, end of story. In fact, what was quoted in Galatians 3:28, which is a beautiful phrase—I love it—is, in Christ there is no male nor female, Jew nor Gentile; I could go on. Clearly, had he lived today, he would have said gay or straight etc. There are no binaries in Christ. We are all one in Christ, Jesus. That is Christian. That's what Christianity looks like.

Judaism and Islam are not homophobic either. For one thing, we heard some deputations where people came forward and they assumed to speak for all Christians or all Jews or all Muslims or all people of colour or all people of one ethnicity. Nobody speaks with that voice, Mr. Speaker—nobody.

I happen to be a clergyperson in the United Church, the largest Protestant denomination in Canada, and it was my privilege to, over and over and over again, say at those hearings that we have been ordaining openly gay and lesbian people since 1988, we're in favour of same-sex marriage, and we're the largest Protestant denomination. So don't come and say you're speaking for all Christians. We had a church leader here from the Metropolitan Community Church. Don't say you're speaking for all Christians.

Had we had long enough in the hearings—and we specifically didn't want to go on forever; we want this in place in September—we would have heard from Muslims and Jews and others, every religion coming forward and speaking up on behalf of inclusion, diversity, and that most religious concept, love: love for your neighbour, which we all share. Love for your neighbour means inclusion of your neighbour, very simply. To go back to point number one again, it means doing what you can to keep your neighbour safe, doing what you can to keep your neighbour alive, which is, again, why we're here and why we're discussing Bill 13. We're discussing how to keep our neighbours—in this case our children—alive.

1640

Also, when we look at what was said to us in terms of testimony at the hearings and what we know to be true, I always caution everyone that just because somebody comes forward to depute, rushes the door, as it were, and is first there able to speak, does not mean they speak for all of Ontario either—not only not all of that faith group or all of that ethnic group, but not all of Ontario. We know because the polls have shown us. We know because we hear from students that the vast majority of Ontarians want to see children protected, want tougher anti-bullying legislation—which is what they'll get—and want children to be allowed to have the freedom to call their groups what they will.

Again, I go back to the charter. This is their charter right—absolutely their charter right. When we're talking

about charter rights, we have to speak about charter rights for everyone—not just some but everyone.

You know, when we're talking about a bullying bill too, what we heard was sometimes bullying language around the bullying bill. We had some testimony that came forward that almost sounded like a veiled threat—a threat of legal action, for example—if this bill is passed. Well, be that as that may. By all means, it is within the rights of anyone to go after anybody in the courts; there's no question about that. But really? Really, when all we're about here is to save the lives of our children? That's what we're about here. I think of those brave children. And I know they don't see themselves as children, some of them, but I'm old—and we're old in here—and I still see them as children. If you're a teenager, you're a child, I'm sorry, in my book.

I think of Leanne, who came before us, and of the GSAs. I think of the other student organizations who came before us. I think of what they've already been through trying to start a group, fighting an uphill battle against all the array of power and might of school boards, all the array of power and might of adults. Now to say that they're going to be up against the power and might of lawyers and the legal system, all to stop Leanne from calling a group a name that is completely acceptable in all of Ontario and that is her charter right? Really, the brunt of that kind of power is going to be used against these children? Is that not bullying? Is that not bullying? These are children at risk, and those forces out there are saying, "Not only will we not allow them to call their group their own name, but if they do, we're going to come after them." They've already been come after by the bullies in their schools. They've already been come after by forces in their lives. Now it's not going to end here. They're saying, "We'll still come after you, but we'll come after you as adults and lawyers, and we'll take you to court." I mean, please—please. Any adult of compassion and love would say, "Enough. Enough."

Just the other day I heard of another suicide of a queer kid in the States over bullying in the schools. How many will it take? How many deaths will it take before we recognize and realize what we're about here is a very small and simple step towards making that kind of environment impossible? To take the tools of the bully away from the bullies: That's what we're about. That was most disconcerting, to hear adults yet again—adults this time, not fellow children, but adults—threatening at the testifying that we heard at the hearings.

In the end, this bill will pass. It will. I know it will. In the end, it will be put into schools, and that, in a sense, is where our work here begins, not where it ends. Because as it's put into schools in September, as it works its way through the classrooms and all those teachable moments, as children begin to start to form those groups, many of which of course are formed already, but those who perhaps have had some problems starting those groups will be given some added weight to be able to start those groups: That's when all of us will be called upon to move that next step.

You heard my bench mate Peter Tabuns, the wonderful lead on this, the member from Toronto—Danforth, our education critic, speak about how money is needed. You heard the member from Beaches—East York speak about it too. There's no money behind this bill. We need finances and resources to be able to truly live out the spirit of this bill. We would implore the government to look at those resources and to really resource this initiative, because that will give it weight and will give it teeth and will protect more lives. So there's that.

But then there's also a call upon all of us as adults wherever we are, whether we're in the Catholic school system or in the secular school system—wherever we are—to wake up and see what's truly going on in our midst, what this bill is an expression of. It's an expression of a changing world, a more accepting, inclusive world, and it's also an expression of truth about ourselves, of looking at ourselves in the mirror and remembering what it was like to be a child, and whether we were a bully or bullied, to remember that and refuse to participate in doing that or being part of that for a new generation of students.

That's what we're being called to do. In a sense, the students are calling us to truly be adults. The students are calling us to truly be adults. The students are calling us to truly be mature, to get beyond whatever we think we know, whatever our theories are, whether religious or secular, about other people and begin to see each other as human beings first, perhaps as human beings at risk as well and to make sure, because our neighbours are our responsibility whether we're people of faith or not, that our neighbour and our children are safe, to do whatever it takes to make sure they're safe.

That's what we're talking about and, in so doing, by the way, model for them as teachers, parents, school trustees, boards and leaders of faith, what we want them to grow into, which is accepting, loving adults who actually extend themselves for other people, who actually make sure, despite what we may think or what theories we may hold, to extend themselves to others who, whether they're delusional or not, think they're at risk. My goodness, that's so little to ask of adults, really, and that's so little to model for our children.

I would say that the passage of this bill is really just the first thing we do today. The next step is far more important, and that's when it gets into schools and the children start coming home and talking about it with us, and when our children want to try to start gay-straight alliances in our schools. That's when we will be called on to truly be mature, loving, inclusive, welcoming parents, adults, teachers and boards, and to speak to someone and not about them.

I have a good friend who talks about those people in faith circles who talk about the care and feeding of the homosexual person. We're not talking about that. We're talking about children. We're talking about individual children. If we can get past what we think we know about them to actually engage with them in conversation and actually, more importantly, listen to them, which is the

job of good parents, good teachers, good faith leaders, then we move the next step and truly begin to protect them.

1650

To go back to the beginning, what is this bill about? This bill is about life and death. It's about saving lives of students at risk, all students at risk, for whatever reason they are being bullied, and the name "gay-straight alliance" has to be there because that's one of the major reasons why kids are bullied and that's what children want. They want to call themselves gay-straight alliances—yes, even in Catholic schools. That's what they feel they need, and they're right, because studies have shown they're right. Studies have shown it will protect them. Studies have shown that if they have groups called that or similar names, they will be better protected, that the death rate will go down.

We as adults have to look at the studies, not just the studies we like but at the broadest studies that have been done in North America that may challenge what we think we know, and move forward in faith—yes, in faith—trying to make this work, trying to help it work, trying to help our students, trying to keep our students alive. That's what we're called to do as people of faith and as people of no faith. That's what we're called to do as parents, that's what we're called to do as teachers, that's what we're called to do as students, that's what we're called to do as trustees, and that's what we're called to do as leaders in faith communities.

We are called to not judge but to love. If we do that and not just pass a bill but live out the spirit of a non-bullying, welcoming, inclusive society, more students will survive school alive. It's that simple, my friends and those listening and watching at home. It's just that simple. Will we choose life or not? Will we vote for life and all that supports it or not? Will we move forward with our students or not?

The bill is about life and death. Let's vote for life. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Mississauga—Brampton South.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and speak in support of Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, put forward by our government. As a former teacher, I know first-hand how important it is to treat every student with respect and dignity. Research shows that a safe, inclusive and accepting school is essential for school achievement and for school well-being. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990, every child has the right to feel safe at school, at home, and in the community.

We know that almost one third of students in Ontario experience bullying at school, and one quarter report that they have bullied someone else. Bullying can have a big impact on students when they are young and later in life, as adults. Bullying hurts big time, in many cases for a long time and sometimes forever. Recognizing this serious problem, our government has put forward Bill 13.

Fear-mongering by those who want to oppose this important piece of legislation is unfortunate. Every day

my constituents ask me, "Is the government using Bill 13 to implement its sexual education curriculum?" Speaker, the answer is no. Bill 13 deals with bullying. It doesn't deal with Ontario's sexual education curriculum.

Is Bill 13 only focused on homophobic bullying? Mr. Speaker, no. Bill 13 is intended to deal with all forms of bullying, including cyberbullying. It would make it clear that any form of bullying is unacceptable in our schools, whether it is based on race, gender, sexual orientation, age, size, strength, or any other factor.

Does Bill 13 promote a homosexual agenda? The answer is, again, Mr. Speaker, no. Bill 13 promotes respect and understanding for all students regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, size, strength, or any other factor.

Does Bill 13 force all school boards to implement gay-straight alliances in their schools? The answer is, again, Mr. Speaker, no. If it becomes law, Bill 13 will require all boards and schools to support students who want to establish and lead activities intended to build respect and understanding of all students. Students can form groups that promote understanding of anti-racism, people with disabilities, gender equity, sexual orientation and gender identity. Bill 13 is intended to protect and support all students. If it becomes law, Bill 13 will help prevent and address bullying, harassment, and discrimination in our schools.

But schools alone cannot end bullying. Everyone has a role to play in achieving safe, inclusive and accepting schools, including the government, school boards, school staff, teachers, principals, parents and community members. Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of this House to vote in favour of Bill 13.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act. I will say first that I stand here very proudly to speak in support of Bill 13, as amended through the work that was done by the committee.

I also stand here proudly with all the members of the Legislature who are supporting Bill 13, because finally we are showing leadership. We are showing leadership in terms of protecting our children in our schools, making sure that our children are safe from bullying, from harmful bullying, which in many, many instances is forcing our children to take their own lives, something, Speaker, that none of us can just stand by and watch: to see our future generation take their own lives because they cannot tolerate, they cannot bear, how they are treated at their schools.

Every day, every morning, parents get up, they help prepare the children to go to school. They help them prepare to go to school so that they can have a brighter future, so that they can learn at school and be better people, so they can have a brighter future. They don't send their kids to school to get bullied. They don't send their kids to school so they can get harassed for a variety of reasons, be it that they're fat, they're skinny, they have

red hair or not; be it because of their gender, racial ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or a disability.

Our schools are there to provide education, not to pick apart our children. But that's what's going on, and the problem is going to an epidemic level. Therefore, it's extremely important that we take bold steps and we take those bold steps now, and that's exactly what Bill 13 does.

1700

I'm very proud, Speaker, that the bill speaks about bullying of all kinds, but it also ensures, based on evidence, a focus on the kind of bullying that our kids face the most, be it based on gender, on race, on disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. We need to make sure that our children are not facing discrimination, harassment or bullying because of these factors. They are there to learn; they are there to be nourished; they are there to grow so they can be the best citizens of this province and this great country of ours. That is what we are doing.

We are making sure that, as a Legislature, we are making a very strong statement against homophobia, against transphobia, against biphobia. We're saying that all kids are the same; they are equal and they deserve the protection of the state; they deserve the love and nurturing and good education that they so very much deserve.

Speaker, that is why I am extremely proud to stand here today and speak in support of Bill 13. I think the bill that is in front of us is a stronger bill. It's a bill that is going to save lives. But our work is not done just by passing this bill. This is a very important step that we are taking today because it's a very strong message we are sending out as leaders of our communities. But what we need to also ensure, beyond the passage of Bill 13, which I hope will take place by this Legislature, is that we implement it in the true spirit of this bill, of this law; that we ensure that we work with our parents, with our children, with our school boards, our teachers so those protections are there. We need to make sure that students have the right, the capacity to create peer support groups because, again, evidence shows that that is the best way to deal with bullying. Things like gay-straight alliances will help students to come together to provide support to each other, to look after each other. We need to make sure that those steps take place after the passage of this law.

Lastly, I think the message that we need to really send out, which is extremely important, is that none of us here in this Legislature or outside in our communities, be it students, teachers, parents, school staff, could be bystanders. If we see bullying of any form take place, we need to intervene; we need to step up; we need to send the message that it is not okay. We need to promote a culture of acceptance, of celebration of diversity. We need to make sure that—just like smoking is wrong, especially indoors; just like we know that we do not drink and drive anymore, and we intervene because that takes lives—if we see bullying taking place, especially

against our children, that we step in and we intervene and we ensure that there is no place for bullying.

Speaker, once again, I am extremely proud of what we are accomplishing through Bill 13. I want to congratulate the Minister of Education for her steadfast support for Bill 13 and her work, and all the members who will be voting in support of this bill. Together, we're making a brighter future for our children.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to rise and speak in strong support of Bill 13 this afternoon. I'm going to do it from the perspective of the person who chaired the Safe Schools Action Team. That started a few years ago, back in our first mandate, actually. Some of the new members may not know about the work of the Safe Schools Action Team, but we actually went around the province not once but three times, talking to organizations, to parents, to students, to school boards all across the province and wrote three separate reports that were, in one way or another, connected to the subject of bullying prevention and then what you do when you do have bullying—how do you manage it? I want to talk a little bit about this bill and the whole subject from that perspective.

First off, I think the thing that's important is to address some of the misconceptions. Some people have spoken today about the fact that the bill does in fact address all forms of bullying. I think it would actually be useful to read the definition we're ending up with in the amended bill.

This will be the definition in Bill 13: "Bullying" means aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a pupil where,

"(a) the behaviour is intended by the pupil to ...

"(i) [cause] harm, fear or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social or academic harm, harm to the individual's reputation or harm to the individual's property, or

"(ii) creating a negative environment at ... school ... and

"(b) the behaviour occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance between the pupil and the individual based on factors such as size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, disability or the receipt of special education."

Then it goes on to say, "For the purposes of the definition of 'bullying' ... behaviour includes the use of any physical, verbal, electronic, written or other means," and goes on to define cyberbullying: "... bullying includes bullying by electronic means (commonly known as cyberbullying), including,

"(a) creating a web page or a blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;

"(b) impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted on the Internet; and

"(c) communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals."

The point of reading all of this is the fact that I can't think of anything that is left out of that definition, Speaker. It's an extraordinarily comprehensive definition. It looks at the academic definition, it looks at the practical causes that often invoke bullying, and it looks at all the different ways in which kids bully each other. If you want to know about bullying, it's all there in that definition. It's absolutely, totally complete.

The current policy goes on to talk about boards needing to have programs in place to prevent bullying, under all that broad, broad definition. In fact, under this current policy, schools and school boards already have lots of clubs that take a broad-based approach to bullying.

I think about a Catholic school that we visited in Toronto that had a very sophisticated bullying prevention program. The students actually took the lead in identifying a theme each month which resonated with the students, in terms of talking about racism one month, ethnic diversity another month or social diversity another month. The kids chose the theme. That school even had a website where the kids could anonymously report bullying incidents in the school—so, very comprehensive, very all-encompassing. Under Bill 13, that will continue. There is absolutely no reason under Bill 13 that you would change that club or that approach. That was the approach that the kids in that school wanted to take.

There are also lots of examples of programs, activities, clubs under the existing policy that already look at a particular sort of bullying.

1710

I think about a school we visited in London, Ontario, a public high school where they had a very specific activity around cyberbullying and Internet safety and were working with the students broadly based all over the school on Internet safety and cyberbullying. Under Bill 13, that activity can absolutely continue. There is nothing in Bill 13 that will interfere with that approach. If that's where the students and the evidence in that school shows they need to address, that absolutely can and will continue. So this whole sort of thing about, "Under Bill 13, you're going to interfere with the great programs we have," is utter nonsense. All the great things that are going on can keep going on.

What we did find with the Safe Schools Action Team was that, in many cases, if the kids wanted to deal with homophobic bullying, it was denied. Permission was denied. It was under that broad definition. The only thing we regularly ran into where the kids were denied permission to deal with the issue was around gay and lesbian, trans and bi students and wanting to deal with homophobic bullying. Then it was, "You can't do that." You could do everything else, but you couldn't do that. We heard that over and over.

In the third report of the Safe Schools Action Team, we said you need to allow something called gay-straight

alliances. We actually thought about this: Should we require them? But the kids said, "No, it's just if we feel comfortable having a gay-straight alliance. Don't make us, because there are some communities where we wouldn't feel comfortable doing that." So we said it's the kids' option.

Then we said, should we make them be called gay-straight alliances? Some of the kids said, "We want to call it a 'gay-straight alliance,' because it's important that we name what we're talking about, which is gays." In some cases, when we talked to adults in schools, they wouldn't even say the word "gay." They were afraid. When the adults in a school are afraid to say the word "gay," you know there's a problem. The kids said, "You know, in some schools, calling it 'gay-straight' would be good. In other schools, we don't think we're ready to go there. Let us choose the name."

The point was, the kids know what's appropriate for their culture, their circumstances, their needs. Let the kids choose. So that's what we said, and it's been in provincial policy now for several years that that's the case.

But do you know what the Ministry of Education has heard? Despite that provincial policy, what we certainly heard at the Bill 13 hearings is that kids are still being denied permission to have GSAs, hence pulling it out and putting it specifically in legislation, not because it's the only thing we need to do, but because it's the one thing where kids are consistently denied permission to deal with the issue of homophobic bullying. That's how we got to where we got.

There's been talk about, "Oh, did you listen to the delegations?" I have to tell you, Speaker, that the correspondence I have received—some of the delegations I heard on Bill 13 probably had an unintended consequence. They convinced me absolutely that if that was the level of vitriol addressed toward gay, lesbian, trans and bi students, we absolutely need Bill 13 to protect the kids.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's a great honour and privilege to be able to rise to speak to Bill 13.

I want to just acknowledge the work of the member from Guelph, because she was such a leader on the safe schools file. You can tell by the way she spoke today that she is invested in this issue, she understands it, and she is thorough and so intelligent in her approach to it. I think we all should be grateful for the work that she did—not to mention she was my parliamentary assistant at the time, which was fantastic.

It's a pleasure to be able to speak about this bill. I want to talk about three things. I want to follow up on the point that the member from Guelph made about the work that's going on in the schools, I want to talk a little bit about what the expectation of boards will be, and then I want to talk about some myths about Bill 13.

The point that the member for Guelph made about the work that's already going on in the schools: It's my

belief that much of what we did in putting in place first a policy, the equity and inclusive education policy as well as the safe schools policy, really was taking some of the very best practices from around the province and saying, "We believe that this is what should be happening in all our schools," because there are equity-seeking educators who have been helping kids to form clubs; who have been training each other; who have been creating camps where kids can go to learn about equity; who have been doing professional development and working with trustees and parents to make sure that their schools were safe, positive places for many years. One of our concerns as a government was that those practices were not uniform across the system, so the development of the equity and inclusive education policy and the safe schools policy really was in reaction to the work that we did to look at what was going on in the system.

For example, before the equity and inclusive education policy was put in place, of 72 boards, there were only 40 that had equity policies. What we determined was, that's not good enough. It needs to be a system-wide process, and there needs to be permission and an expectation from the ministry that boards will behave in this way and that everyone will be working to create safe schools.

What Bill 13 does is, that it says boards must have policies. Boards must have equity and inclusive education policies. Boards must have and monitor the effectiveness of those policies. They must use surveys; they must find ways to monitor whether the policies that they've got in place are working or not. Bill 13 says that boards must provide training for teachers, and services and resources, so that the anti-bullying interventions and the positive-school-climate initiatives actually have some resource behind them. The bill says that boards must develop bullying prevention and intervention plans.

All of those mechanisms that we know create safer schools, that we know create safer classrooms, must be in place. That's what the bill says. It seems to me that those are initiatives that, really, there shouldn't be any argument about. There shouldn't be any partisan divide; there shouldn't be any divide among the general population that those are things that should be in place. The member for Guelph read the definition of bullying, and member after member from this side of the House and from the third party have stood up and said that anti-bullying is about difference, about kids who marginalize each other for a whole range of reasons, and we can't accept that behaviour. We need to find a way to deal with it. That's what Bill 13 is about.

What Bill 13 is not about—and I just want to talk a little bit about some of the myths, because as the member from Guelph identified, when we looked and when we look at what goes on in schools—and before I came to elected office, I worked in schools doing conflict resolution work. I was a mediator. I worked with kids, training them in conflict resolution; I worked with teachers—and I discovered much of what the member for Guelph said: that there were a few subjects that really were taboo which the system and individuals didn't want

to deal with. I can tell you, reflected in my own life, when I came out to my father at the age of 37—my father was a medical practitioner, and he said to me, "You know, Kathleen, you're going to have to be very patient with people, because this is a deep taboo. It's a deep fear that people have of homosexuality." I understand that. I understand that it's a deeply rooted fear.

1720

The reality is that children in our school system, whether they are struggling with their own sexual orientation, whether they're questioning, whether they are kids who were born into a gay family—and we need to remember that there are kids going to school today and there will be kids going to school in September for the very first time who come from gay or lesbian or trans families, and they didn't choose. They are not necessarily gay. Who knows? They're going to school from a family that we have to make sure is accepted in our schools because it's in the best interests of that child that they see themselves reflected and that they are included in the life of the school.

Some of the myths about Bill 13 are:

—that the bill is only about gay kids, trans kids or bi kids. That's absolutely not true. The bill is about all kids in our schools. In fact, it's about all of our teachers, it's about all of our families, finding a place that's open and inclusive.

—that the bill is somehow about taking away principals' authority. It's not about that. It's about creating a community in a school that is open to having a conversation that's a very difficult conversation. If every school and every board in the province had been able to broach these conversations and had been able to create environments where everyone was accepted, then we wouldn't need the bill. But that isn't what has happened. We do need the bill. We do need the direction.

—that this bill is only about clubs. That's not what it's about. It's not about clubs. It's about creating a positive school climate. As a number of members have said, the reaction to the notion that kids should be able to choose the name of their club I think pushed the determination that we make it clear that students should have the ability to choose the name of their club.

—somehow that this bill is only about homophobia. That is absolutely not the case.

I want to just talk about the flip side of homophobia for one second, and that is the notion of heterosexism. We haven't talked a lot about that and the notion of homophobia. "Homophobia" is the word that is used, but heterosexism is the flip side of that, that somehow there is only one way to be. I think that we need to recognize that those assumptions are what create an environment that sometimes is not safe for kids who are questioning.

I want to conclude by saying thank you to all of the people in the province who have been so supportive of inclusive schools, of equity in our education system. I honestly believe that the vast majority of people in Ontario believe that it is important that we put this legislation through; that we support all of the kids in our

schools, no matter their size, shape, background, sexual orientation, questioning status; that we support all of those kids and their families. I believe that that's the majority consensus of people in this province, and so I want to thank them.

I also want to thank the members of this Legislature who have worked so hard to make sure that we were able to integrate the bills that have come forward. We now have an amended bill that I think captures the sentiment of a school system that is positive, that is inclusive and that recognizes that there are differences and allows us to put in place a climate—it won't be overnight, but that's the goal—in our schools that is accepting for all of our kids, because that's the only way they're going to achieve, and that's the only way they're going to be able to live their hopes and dreams in our society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 13. I've heard some pretty good comments this afternoon from members from all sides of the House that I think we should all be proud of as members of the different parties.

I'm of the opinion that each generation gets things a little bit better. When I think of my own parents, it's kind of difficult, but I think by today's standards my parents would have been what we would consider pretty racist. They weren't any different than anybody else, don't get me wrong, but at that time there was a certain level of racism that was tolerated in our society. I'd like to think that I got a little bit better at it. I thought that some of the things I was raised with, that influenced me—I also thought, "Well, I've got my own way of thinking too. I'm going to make my own decisions on this."

I also like to think that my son is better than I am. What drove that home to me one day is when I dropped him off at a child care centre. He came back the next day and said, "Dad, I made a friend today. I want you to meet him." So I went to the child care centre to pick him up the next day. I walked into the centre, and he introduced me to this young man and said, "This is my friend. This is Sidney." This young man was about four or five. His name was Sidney Wong. I said, "Hi, Sidney," and we exchanged some pleasantries and we left. As I was driving home, I turned to my son, Nigel, and I said, "Sidney is Chinese." I didn't mean anything by that other than just an observation. And Nigel turned to me and said, "No, he's not. He's my friend."

I thought, "There's a lot in a single sentence." The first thing I noticed was what was different. The first thing my little four- or five-year-old at the time noticed was what was the same about them, and that's a lesson. My son is now 32 and gets embarrassed every time I tell that story, but I'm going to continue to tell it because it's a story that most social change in our society has been led by kids. If you look at environmental protection, smoking, drinking and driving, recycling, anything I can think of where we've made some real strides has been done by young people.

I had the privilege of hearing the public delegations on Bill 13 as a member of the standing committee. We heard from church leaders and school leaders, we heard from a variety of faiths, and we heard from students themselves and people who have been bullied. The overriding concern was that we needed to do something about it. The question was how we did it. What methods do we use to do it?

I also chaired the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions: fantastic conduct on that committee by members of all three parties to pull together. All they wanted to do was the right thing. But we also heard the tragic consequences of not doing anything. We heard about anxiety and depression, and unfortunately, we heard about the suicide that often follows that.

I had the very fortunate circumstance to be contacted by a young lady named Twoey Gray. Twoey leads the gay-straight alliance of Blakelock High School in Oakville. She asked me if I'd come out and meet the group. So I did last Friday, and what came from the kids very much was, "We don't know what the adults are all upset about here. We've been doing this for five years, and it's working. We can't for the life of us think why anybody would want to stop us from doing this."

There were kids there who were gay, there were kids there who were lesbian, there were kids there who were straight. We talked about issues and about how tough it is to tell your mom or dad that you think that maybe you're gay or lesbian; or how tough it was to find out that a friend who you thought was heterosexual ends up being gay or lesbian, and the issues you have to go through; and how some derogatory terms have entered the lexicon of our society and we use these insulting terms in a very offhand way, and how it has to stop.

It's a very, very small bill; it's only four or five pages. But as was said by a previous speaker on this, it has the potential to save lives. If implemented properly, it has the potential to change lives and actually save lives. I think it deserves the support of all members of the House. I think it's a sign that we're getting it better and that every generation does get it a little better. I think that in the future we'll probably even move on from this.

But I think the overriding concern we should all have is to remember that these aren't somebody else's kids and that these kids don't exist in an orbit somewhere else. These are our kids. Collectively, these are just as much the kids of the moms and dads in this Legislature as they are in the society that's outside these walls. They deserve the best from this House. They deserve the protection of this House. They deserve legislation that obviously has some people a little upset. My sense is that they're going to get over that upset and they're going to see the positive things I saw when I visited Blakelock High School on Friday. I got this little rainbow bracelet as a gift for visiting, and just saw about 20 ordinary Oakville kids trying to do their best to make the world a little better place. We need legislation that's more in line with that. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 3, 2012, I am now required to put the question. Ms. Broten has moved third reading of Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I think I can help you out here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. I wish to inform the House that I have received a deferral notice from the chief government whip. This vote will therefore be deferred until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes, after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the timetable motion passed by the House on May 31, 2012.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move:

That in section "(b) Committees" of the motion passed by the House on May 31, in the paragraph respecting the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the phrase "agreement of the subcommittee on committee business" is interpreted to mean unanimous agreement of the subcommittee on committee business; and

That in section "(c) Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts," the dates and times established for public hearings and for clause-by-clause be adjusted as follows:

Public hearings:

Wednesday, June 6: 9 a.m. to 10:25 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 9 p.m.;

Thursday, June 7: 9 a.m. to 10:25 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.;

Friday, June 8: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.;

Monday, June 11: 9 a.m. to 10:25 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.;

Tuesday, June 12: 9 a.m. to 10:25 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.;

Clause-by-clause:

June 14: 9 a.m. to 10:25 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.;

June 18: 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.;

June 19: 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.; and

That the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills be authorized to meet on Thursday, June 7, 2012, from 9 a.m. to 10:25 a.m. and following routine proceedings until 5 p.m. for the purpose of receiving testimony, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, on Bill 77, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to enhancing fairness for employees; and

That the testimony and papers received by the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills on Bill 77 shall then be transferred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Milloy has moved that in—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Dispensed.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1734.

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Tuesday 5 June 2012

Mardi 5 juin 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 June 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 juin 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WIRELESS SERVICES AGREEMENTS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LES CONVENTIONS DE SERVICES SANS FIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on May, 29, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / *Projet de loi 82, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I didn't have the opportunity to do an inaugural speech, Mr. Speaker, so I was going to start with that today, before I complete my speech today.

I took over the riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry from a list of people who worked long and hard for the area. Many here and at home can recount the work of Jim Brownell, my immediate predecessor, who took a keen interest in history and put the interests of our people at the forefront. He followed John Cleary, a local mayor and warden of the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, working alongside my dad, Bernie McDonell, who was a former reeve of Lancaster township.

Previous to John, Noble Villeneuve, Minister of Agriculture under the Mike Harris government, ensured that the issues of rural Ontario were always addressed. No matter where I go, if people make the connection, they immediately bring back stories of Noble, and regardless of their party affiliation, they talk about the fun they had.

I'd like to talk about the proud riding in eastern Ontario. The historic counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, the gateway to Upper Canada in the late 1700s, were originally settled by Scottish Highlanders and the Empire Loyalists after the American Revolution.

This group of hard-working pioneers turned rough, untouched land into productive farms and villages. But one of their top priorities, next to food and shelter, was to immediately ensure that their children were educated to ensure their prosperity and the prosperity of the country. Many of these people and their descendants moved west and played major roles in the development of this country.

Concerned about the ambitions of our neighbours to the south, Rev. Alexander Macdonell obtained permission from the crown to assemble a militia, and the Glengarry Fencibles were formed at St. Raphaels. They were instrumental in defeating the Americans at Crysler's Farm on the other remembrance day, November 11, 1813, blocking the advance on Montreal of the Americans and forever changing the history of North America. This group went on to become the SD&G Highlanders, distinguishing themselves in the First and Second World Wars. Canada's oldest regiment is still honouring Canada in far-off areas of the world, recently returning from Afghanistan.

I was born and raised on a dairy farm in Lancaster township in eastern Ontario, the son of Bernie and Mary Elizabeth, descendants of the original settlers, and part of a family of 12 boys and girls. We learned at a young age to pitch in and help out with the daily load on the farm. Our educational experience spanned everything from a one-room school in Bridge End, moving up to the three-room Sam J. McLeod school at Bainsville and on to Glengarry District High School, with 1,400 children.

Then I was accepted into an engineering program at Queen's University. I look at my time at Queen's with great pride, where I obtained more than just an education and made many great friends. We worked hard, especially in first year when many of our friends didn't make it through. In fact, in a class of 76, almost two thirds of the class didn't make it through—definitely a warning to our class. In the end, it paid off and I'm a proud Queen's alumnus.

When I visit schools today to talk about local and now provincial politics, I encourage young high school students not only to go to post-secondary school but to consider the field of engineering, as it teaches one to work on a team; to use the latest science to analyze problems; and to propose practical, cost-effective solutions.

As a side note, I remember a non-engineering class in which the presenter's entire lecture—for an hour—talked about the logic of engineers in politics, for this very reason of having a background in science: being trained to analyze problems and develop practical solutions. One

would think this professor was actually looking forward to today's government and the need for practical, cost-effective solutions.

Growing up on a dairy farm in the 1960s and 1970s taught me about early mornings, long days and hard work. I experienced first-hand how supply management changed the industry, definitely for the better. I have seen milk cheques in the early 1960s for \$7 a week. Granted, it was the spring before calving, and lots of inflation has occurred since, but there wasn't a lot of money to go around, especially for a family of 12. Supply management allowed for mechanization and immense improvements in efficiencies that provide Canada with secure, high-quality food that we have grown used to today.

During university, I had a number of summer jobs: on the farm; installing water and sewer in Vankleek Hill; working in the oil sands of Fort McMurray; and as a technician at the Bruce nuclear plant. After university, I took a job with Bell Canada, working in Brockville and Sudbury before returning home to my native Glengarry county. I enjoyed 32 years at Bell Canada, which allowed me to spend most of my time in eastern Ontario. I particularly enjoyed my time working on the rollout of high-speed Internet to the area, as I truly believe it is an economic equalizer.

The original Scottish emigrants, mixed with the French movement from Quebec, developed a truly unique area of Canada, a musical and social atmosphere that is labelled today as the Celtic heartland of Canada.

I married my wife, Margie McRae, a high school friend, and we raised three children: Marion, Chelsea and Bernie. It was then that I got involved as a volunteer, first filling in as president of the Border men's hockey league. I also started coaching minor soccer and hockey, as part of the Char-Lan minor associations for more than 20 years. It was during these years at Char-Lan that I worked with Greg McCulloch on the executive. We really enjoyed working with the kids and watching them have fun. We worked countless hours together, and we always had a way of making it happen for the kids.

I enjoyed working with all the great kids, watching them grow up and being part of the community. I take great pride in seeing today Michael Robertson, who's on Canada's Olympic track team, and Christina Julien, who is Canada's second-leading scorer on the women's national soccer team.

I then joined the Williamstown Fair board, a true example of volunteers at work. This August, Canada's oldest annual fair will be celebrating its 200th anniversary.

I eventually got into politics, back when Bob Rae was Premier, serving as councillor for nine years, mayor for eight, and warden in the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry in 2006.

I followed in the footsteps of my grandfather, Rory Angus McLeod, who was the deputy reeve of Lancaster township in the 1920s and 1930s, and my dad, Bernie, reeve of Lancaster township in the 1980s. I always tried to follow the example he set, as he always believed in treating everybody fairly and the same.

I would like to take a second to acknowledge some of the people who helped me through my days in politics. Of course, my wife, Margie, and my family—our children, Bernie, Marion and Chelsea—were always there when I needed them. In the early days on council, I met Garry Roberson, a tremendous volunteer in the township, who helped me throughout my days in politics and showed me how to run an election. He, along with Rick Marvel and Barry Millet, loved politics and spent many a late night working on the cause. And of course, my brothers and sisters always stepped up to help when I needed something done. My brother Chris, mayor of North Gengarry, and his wife, Yvonne, were big helps. During my run for MPP, I had many great supporters: Marilyn McMahon, Guy Lauzon, Eric Duncan, Glen Grant, Marcel Lapierre, Les O'Shaughnessy, Verla Perrin, and many more. I'd like to thank them so much.

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Now I'd like to get on to the task at hand in Bill 82, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device. That's quite a mouthful, and I'll refer to its somewhat shorter name, the Wireless Services Agreements Act. It was introduced several weeks ago, on April 12, with some fanfare and great anticipation. I have a press release of that day in front of me. It makes some interesting reading. Before I delve into it, though, I'd like to share some speculations of mine with the House.

We all remember that on the days before and after April 12, this assembly was seized with the budget. We were observing a passionate deal-or-no-deal tango, particularly during question period, courtesy of the Premier and the leader of the third party. According to many Ontarians and many members of the press, there was a credible chance that Ontario might be plunged into an election over the Premier's disastrous mismanagement of the province's affairs.

With pressure heating up on the Ornge scandal, we were looking for a diversion. When we consider not just the policy but the timing of the announcement, I can see that the bill we have before us may be more about politics than actual substance. Any announcement from a ministry is guaranteed to grab the attention of the media, even more so during a slower news day at Queen's Park, as a constituency week always is, and the week of April 12 was a constituency week.

Furthermore, a Thursday announcement was just in time for the Saturday and weekend papers. By all standards, the Ministry of Consumer Services pulled off a public relations success by diverting attention toward this feel-good bill.

Examining the release itself, I'm immediately treated to the words "McGuinty government," and I can't help but wonder why the minister wouldn't seek to take some of the credit for introducing such an apparently popular and apparently sweeping reform in an industry every Ontarian deals with.

But let's not give all the credit to the minister, as her honourable colleague from Sault Ste. Marie has waged a

battle for transparency in wireless contracts since 2010 and presented a bill to this Legislature on our third sitting day, November 23, to that effect, a law that I will remind you passed second reading on December 1 and was in committee awaiting examination.

Here I will point out, Speaker, another aspect of this government's approach that puzzles me. It is important to bring this to light, and its relevance to the bill in question, because the intent and the spirit of the law are sometimes as important as the law itself.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie introduced this bill on November 23. It received all-party support at second reading on December 1 and was sent to committee, where it languished for several months and is still not moving. With this bill before the House, due to our parliamentary procedures, Bill 5 will likely not see the light.

Had the government cared about public input into the hearings and the workings of the province, rather than isolate itself in the working towers of its ministries, the committees of this Legislature would have been created before the winter break and allowed to sit through that session. Had the government genuinely cared about cellphone consumers, they would have moved the relevant amendments to Bill 5 in committee during December and January, and in the second sitting week of February the regulation could have been put in place. Come August, the provisions of a wireless consumer protection bill would be in full force. Instead, it's June already and we're just beginning the discussion all over again—same principle, same faces, different bill number, and of course, different claimants to the credit.

I know the member for Sault Ste. Marie cares deeply about the issue, and I'm sure he is as frustrated with the needless setback as are those Ontarians who complain about their cellphone service.

Seeing that we're talking about the timing of this government's announcements and their subordination of policy to column inches in the *Toronto Star*, let me offer this House another interesting fact. The CRTC announced earlier this year that it would begin consultations regarding a national regulatory framework on wireless contracts. The proposals are supposed to be modeled after Quebec's Bill 60, and involve simple contract terms, less burdensome cancellations, transparency in costs and transparency in agreement amendments. It sounds quite similar to the bill we have before us and to Bill 5.

The CRTC informed the media of the consultation process on April 4, a full eight days before the ministry issued the press release about the "McGuinty government taking strong action." Ordinary citizens could contribute to the consultation online by visiting the CRTC website and submitting their opinion before May 3, the very same day the minister brought this bill before the House and all but killed Bill 5, from which no more media could be milked.

Since this government is one to appreciate short and snappy taglines such as "No more cell shock," I recommend we call this bill by an even shorter name, one that

could sum up the intent very succinctly: Bill 82, the "me too" act.

The same release, dated April 12, proceeds in its first sentence to state that many Ontarians experience a shock when they open their cell bill due to either out-of-the-blue charges or to being billed for something they believed was included in their plan.

The cited source is a report by the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services. I took time to read this particular item, and the ministry's figures are a little incomplete. It is true that, of the commissioner's complaints, 62% dealt with wireless services. What the ministry forgets to mention is the total number of complaints. Considering that we're in the process of passing a regulation affecting a significant number of Ontarians, the public deserves to be as informed as the government, if it isn't better informed already. The total number of complaints from all Canadians logged by the commissioner for the 2010-11 period is 8,007. Of these, 3,314 came from Ontario.

According to an earlier and more informative press release by the member from Sault Ste. Marie when he introduced Bill 5, 77% of Ontarians have a wireless contract, about 10 million of us. So by simple mathematics, we see that if you're from Ontario, you have a one-in-3,000 chance of complaining to the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services. Assuming 10 bills per year, for the sake of simplicity, that translates into approximately one complaint-worthy bill every 300 years.

The annual report this data is extracted from does not go on to split the complaints with merit from those where the CCTS sided with the provider outright, so we cannot know for sure how many customers were wronged in this time period.

The case studies quoted a few pages further paint a mixed picture regarding excessive data bills. Despite what the government may have us believe, one's shock at a large bill for data usage is no guarantee that the bill is cancelled or reduced.

The CCTS, the government's very source of justification for this bill, has confidence in wireless companies' data-monitoring tools. Allow me to quote: "Absent any tangible evidence to suggest that there is a problem with the manner in which the service providers' tools are measuring data usage, we too have little choice but to rely on the accuracy and integrity of the system-measured data usage. To date we have never concluded a complaint with a finding that the provider's system tool was inaccurate. But consumers tell us that they are frustrated and unhappy about being expected to simply accept the accuracy of the data as reported by the service provider. We know that no electronic system is foolproof, and we are aware that one provider admitted an inaccuracy in the way its system billed data usage to a small portion of its customer base."

How did we come to this bill? Over the last 20 years, communication technologies have leaped forward in ways that we could never have predicted. Nine years ago,

BlackBerrys made their first appearance on the broader market, and the now-famous iPhone was launched as recently as 2007. It is common for this market and society in general to evolve faster than the laws passed to govern them. The wireless service industry is a good example of that. We can trust the statistics or we can trust our own eyes. Cellphone communications are shifting away from merely calling and texting towards more data-intensive uses such as Web browsing, media streaming and social networking. I believe that last year smart phones and tablet computers accounted for more sales and more data flow over the Internet than personal computers.

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That is an immense challenge to the industry, considering that the underground networks used by conventional phones and broadband lines cannot be easily used, if at all, for transmitting data used by a smart phone. Companies must invest in new towers and new transmission technology, and the money has to come from somewhere.

There seems to be a consensus by public and the media that the rates paid by cell subscribers in North America are far too high, and that Canadian rates are higher than US rates as well. Reading the Toronto Star article of April 15 offers some insight into the perception that the public or the government have of the wireless phone industry: terms like “gouging,” “relief” and “cracking down,” strong language fit to describe a national emergency.

As legislators elected to exercise our powers wisely, we must approach every issue from different angles and assess each one on its merits, rather than its interpretation by the papers. Our rates are often compared unfavourably to European ones, both in terms of cost and quality of service. The market conditions are not similar. The Canadian market is regulated more tightly than those of the Europeans, but this is only half the problem.

The average European country has a population density of approximately 100 people per square kilometre, over 28.5 times greater than Canada's 3.5 people per square kilometre. We have a total market of about 30 million individuals spread over 10 million square miles. The entire country of Austria wouldn't fill the riding of Algoma-Manitowlin. So we're comparing apples to oranges, and we're missing the most important aspects of the debate.

Quality of service is not dependent on land mass. The government will talk about cell shock, and we will gladly engage them in that discussion. But many more Canadians and Ontarians get frustrated at the customer service provided by our largest wireless companies, and this bill will do nothing, and the government can do nothing, to address this concern. Consumers should not be led to believe that this legislation will all of a sudden solve the problems in the wireless sector, for it won't.

It is, however, a step in the right direction. It will allow consumers to break unsatisfactory contracts without having to pay the full liability for the remainder of the agreement. We join Ontario consumers in welcoming

that, although our reasons and priorities may differ slightly. The current arrangement, where the consumer has to pay up front upon cancellation for all the monthly services he or she will not receive is outlandish and simply an income guarantee scheme for wireless providers.

The excuse that cancellation fee agreements between companies are banned by anti-cartel legislation is true but misleading. Every enterprise in this country is still free to conduct business as it pleases, and could unilaterally waive the requirement for a consumer to pay the remainder of their contract liability. Rogers did this in Ontario, effective January 22 this year.

So before we jump on to the bash-the-market bandwagon, there has been no market failure in this regard—absolutely none. Consumers were legitimately fed up with being bound by the threat of a large cancellation fee. It has been solved.

I worked for Bell for 32 years. It's a company that many love to hate, but it was Bell, and its subsidiary, Virgin Mobile, first introduced the concept of a tab—no-term contract—and deferred payment for the mobile device of your choosing. This concept is being taken up very enthusiastically by other carriers, their low-cost subsidiaries usually jumping in first.

I won't assert that the system is perfect. A consumer purchasing a \$350 phone with Koodo, 100% deferred on a \$35 monthly contract where 10% of one's bill is written off the cost of the phone every month, would pay off his phone in 100 months. To some, that may be a laughable proposal, yet it's a step in the right direction. The consumer is not bound, and they know exactly what they owe on the device and can choose a cheaper device if they so choose.

Another area where the market is working without much government intervention is domestic roaming. Most European companies have separate area codes for mobile devices and one rate for all calls to any part of the country. Any special offers are limited to calls within a carrier's own network. For instance, Spain and France give cellphone companies area codes 06 and 07, the UK is 07 and so on.

As members of the North American numbering plan, Canada does not have that possibility. It does, however, have some positive outcomes. By tying cellular numbers to the local area code, the distinction between calls to cellphones and land lines becomes impossible. Households can go entirely wireless and forgo their land line. In many urban areas, this will not affect users' access to broadband Internet services either, thanks to the availability of affordable so-called “dry” DSL lines that work without an active phone.

Some statistics by the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association estimate that 13% of Canadian households use only wireless service today, and the number is growing. In the US and Canada, a conventional contract used to limit the usage rates to local calling, unless the user purchased a long-distance package. This is no longer the case. To the best of my knowledge, Koodo Mobile is the first Canadian company to do away with

domestic roaming and long-distance charges. The market has again worked in this case, because so-called Canada-wide calling is not a rarity any more. But by all standards across the low-cost providers, no company will ever sell you a service at a net loss. Therefore, doing away with long distance and roaming rates did not impose a total cost on the industry.

I will take care to highlight that the system isn't perfect, either. Low-cost carriers that do not have national coverage are at a disadvantage, since they cannot offer their consumers the mobility that larger, more established providers can give. At some point, outside the GTA, Montreal and Vancouver, your low-cost operator will need to use someone else's network and charge you accordingly. Furthermore, the possible cost of removing long-distance rates may have been passed on to consumers through higher rates in data or a less convenient choice of service and add-on bundles.

Only true competition, in a truly open and transparent market, will drive down the total cost of any wireless service. I am interested to hear the opinion on this matter at the committee stage of Mr. Sawiris, chair of Wind Mobile. He is seeking to expand his service in Canada and could offer some interesting insights.

In the meantime, we have to make the limited market price we're stuck with work. The imperfect arrangement of low-cost subsidiaries to national carriers and smaller, locally bound independent carriers is allowing greater experimentation with plans, tariffs, offers and prices. The price system, better than any survey or Ministry of Finance pre-budget tele-town hall, is allowing customers, Canadians and Ontarians, to vote with their wallets. As a result, we are seeing greater availability of desirable services and we have a greater choice of payment plans and options.

The US counterpart to the wireless telecommunications association had this to say about individual states regulating their own cell market:

"Policy-makers should take a very cautious view towards regulating" the wireless sector. However, "if additional legislative or regulatory support is needed ... consumers would be best served if government action remains at the national level, and the states are only allowed to take appropriate action relative to their laws of general applicability. As the national licensing authority over a national industry, the FCC is the appropriate government body to safeguard consumer protection, public health and safety in the event of any demonstrated market failure."

Speaker, we have an imperfect market, but it isn't stale and it isn't set in stone. It is responding to consumer signals. I don't see a demonstrated failure here, either. Bill 82 is a good proposal, and we look forward to examining it more thoroughly in committee, but it isn't as urgent as some fearmongers would have us believe.

I spoke earlier about comparisons to Europe, and we need to compare apples to apples, so here's a thought: Let's compare the cost of a Blackberry Curve 9360 with a plan in a densely populated area, provided by the same

company in Canada and in Italy. I won't mention the names, so not to bias people. In Canada, one gets a Blackberry Curve, at the regular price of \$300 Canadian, for \$0 on a so-called "tab" that's wiped clean every three years. After three years the handset is yours; the condition: maintaining a \$40-a-month contract. No commitment, except the payment of the remainder of the handset, if the agreement is cancelled within three years. For \$40 a month, one gets unlimited calling throughout Canada, unlimited incoming calls, unlimited texting in Canada, unlimited data and caller ID. The unlimited part is, of course, dependent on where you are. Outside the carrier's coverage range, you're out of luck.

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In Italy, the same company, in a densely populated area, offers the following: The phone's regular price is €300, or around \$387. You can get it for zero if, for a period of two years, you maintain a so-called platinum plan. This includes essentially unlimited talk, texting and data. The price: €70, or C\$90. Drop the plan to gold, which includes almost unlimited talk and text, and you'll pay C\$127, and €50 or C\$65 a month. Overall, for the same phone one would spend C\$1,400 on here, you would spend \$2,100 in Europe. It shows, Speaker, that there's an inordinate amount of hype and hysteria around the issue of wireless communication, and it clouds sound judgment.

The main Canadian providers of wireless services have joined the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association and abide by a code of conduct, freely available for anyone to read. Wireless providers swear by this code, as it includes deliverables designed to make every wireless consumer in Canada an informed one.

In theory, the following information should always be available to the consumer, either at the point of sale or on the company's website: monthly base charge; minutes and data included in the base charge; additional minutes and data rates, which most commonly are the source of cell shock; notice of roaming charges; additional taxes and fees collected; duration of service period; early termination fees; trial period terms; prepaid credit and account expiration dates; and coverage map.

When the consumer signs a contract, the code of conduct demands that the provider include the following in the agreement: all charges that are billed, and how they are calculated; consumer rights in case the charges are changed; the minimum service period and term duration; renewal conditions; and cancellation procedures and cancellation fees.

As far as advertising goes, the code becomes slightly less about deliverables and more about principle: "We do our best to clarify the conditions and charges that apply to the advertised prices for our phones, other wireless devices, and services. If additional charges may or will apply, that fact will be noted in the advertisement.

"Any disclaimers used in our advertising will also be clear, understandable and directly linked to the advertised offer."

On this issue, we could definitely do better. The code does not have criteria for prominence and no mention is

made of all-in pricing, as is the case of Bill 82. If this legislation takes effect, the advertised price will have to include all charges over the entire duration of the agreement if the advertised offer is a contract, or the total monthly charge before HST if the advertised offer is a month-to-month. For a marketing department, this is a nightmare. An often-used strategy in many industries involves the advertisement of a price below a certain threshold to entice the consumer, and the deal is usually concluded personally with a sales representative.

In advertising, we are constantly bombarded with prices just short of a solid number, such as \$199.99, followed by small print. The concealment of important facts in small print will be disallowed by Bill 82. For example, the words "for the first three months only; full monthly charge of X" will now have to be featured prominently in the ad, though the law makes no mention of exactly what "prominent" means. I guess we'll have to wait and see the regulations the minister will make.

Whatever course of action this government decides to take on this issue, they should take great care to ensure that they don't suddenly deprive many marketing executives and advertising departments of their bread and butter. They are well-paying jobs, and reducing our tax base would be quite a pity in these tough economic times.

All-in pricing is a tool for transparency. However, only when it is fair and applies equally to all is it worthwhile, and this is very important. If the government purports to take a stance for consumers, it should follow through without affording any category or provider a special privilege.

The record for this government on this particular issue is not a good one, and I will provide one example. In the automotive dealer sector, regulated by the Ministry of Consumer Services, the dealers' greatest grievance revolves around an exemption in the vehicle dealers' act that binds dealers to all-in pricing but excludes manufacturer advertising. Large advertising campaigns by manufacturers turn into a nightmare for the dealer, as the vehicles are advertised at manufacturer cost without factoring in the costs the dealer has to incur. When the dealer quotes a customer the all-in price, his transparency is taken for dishonesty and profiteering.

This party will never buy the argument that there is still a profit margin somewhere, despite government regulation. It is not the government's job, nor has it ever been, to regulate revenue, profit or business planning. This is an important matter because it involves the fairness of the law and the equality of its application.

Take the bill, turn to page 14 and look at section 23(d): "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations ... exempting any supplier, wireless agreement, goods or services, any combination of any of them or any class of any of them from any provision of this act or the regulations, and prescribing conditions or restrictions that apply in respect of an exemption."

I look forward to hearing from the government on why this clause would be included and why its scope had to be so broad. It leaves the minister vulnerable to intense

lobbying for the purpose of exempting either an entire carrier or a particular product from the act. If I were a dishonest wireless service provider, I would lobby to exempt my newest offered product—let's say, the newest iPhone—from the requirement to disclose its real market value. If a regulation to this effect was issued, my customers wouldn't know the size of the discount I offered them when I signed them up, a discount that they would be expected to pay back should they cancel early. Am I being pessimistic? To my understanding, this is an entirely possible scenario. I look forward to the government side coming back with an answer to this, either during the debate or during the committee stage of this bill. Ontarians deserve to know why a law so widely touted as the silver bullet against all the ills of the cellphone industry includes such a cop-out clause.

As far as cancellation fees go, we on this side of the House are in favour of the provisions in Bill 82. Taking away the right of carriers to charge the consumer total unpaid future liabilities is a way to increase competition. Carriers that provided good customer service and good network service were left at a disadvantage by those who cut corners on some of those aspects and bound their users with the threat of a hefty bill that was sometimes larger than a tax refund. I know we will hear more about this in committee.

I will compare Ontario's cellphone customers to mortgage holders and wireless service providers to banks, for the sake of argument. When we take out a mortgage, the bank doesn't give us the loan out of the goodness of their heart or because we looked well on that particular day. The bank is ensuring its income flow, your interest, so that they can run their operations, expand into other markets, expand their service and offer their depositors an attractive interest rate on savings. In much the same way, our wireless companies prefer long-term contracts because they ensure a greater income security for the provider.

Switching phone companies is not the easiest of tasks. Some people will swallow their frustration and stay with the provider they have an agreement with.

There is an argument to be made by the wireless industry that regulating advertising and cancellations will lead to higher prices. Less secure income will involve, according to some analyses, a drive to increase immediate revenue by raising prices and reducing choice. Earlier this year, I received a brief on the topic from the legislative research service, whom I wish to thank very much, on behalf of the whole House, for their tireless hard work. Let's see if this argument holds water:

"To date, there is no empirical evidence of how the legislation has affected consumers or the industry. The CWTA maintains that the new regulations will result in increased costs and higher prices for consumers; however, the CWTA has received no feedback from its members regarding the impact of the Quebec law.

"According to Quebec's consumer protection office, the new requirements do not appear to have affected prices or the subsidies offered by service providers, and

no companies have left the Quebec market since the new law took effect."

The price of a contract with any major carrier is the same in Quebec as it is in Ontario, and the bundle offers appear to be identical as well.

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Shy of opening up the companies' financial books and the board meeting minutes, we will never know if the enactment of strict consumer protection legislation in Quebec resulted in the rest of Canada sharing the price. For instance, we will not know whether, without Canada's law, our own contract would be \$3 a month cheaper or include extra data. It's simply a matter of speculation.

As I said earlier, this government appears determined to chase the limelight on this issue, whether it's wise or not. The CRTC is consulting with stakeholders throughout the nation, and despite two other provinces introducing legislation, BC and Alberta have already chosen to put the CRTC on notice: "Draw up a national standard or we will regulate our own." It is also worth noting that where the CRTC creates a national standard in an area where jurisdiction is shared by the provinces, the provincial regulating efforts become moot.

Are we jumping the gun on this issue? The way the ministry handled media releases and the tabling of this bill, I believe we might be. We are chasing after Quebec, Manitoba and the CRTC, and trying at the same time not to be outdone by Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

A rushed approach to legislation is dangerous. However mighty and caring this government thinks it is, it is still subject to the laws of unintentional consequences. Good, thorough consultation is the solution, but we have witnessed time and time again the yawning consultation gap this government opened between itself and Ontarians.

It appears this trait is not limited to this Liberal Party. I have been told that the assembly of Nova Scotia sent a wireless regulation bill to committee, who sent an offer to the CWTA to present its case at the committee meeting with one day's notice. We have no explanation for this behaviour other than the unwillingness to hear the other side, heed the warnings it may sound and examine whether they are based in reality.

In a minority Parliament, as we see today, being popular and being perceived as decisive seem to have trumped responsible government and statesman-like restraint. We can now look at Bill 19 and the lack of consultation with landlords, or to Bill 30 and the absence of any statistical base on which it could rest, or regulation 233/10 and the way it was hidden from everyone, key stakeholders included. So we can go on and examine Bill 50 and the false premise that it is a solution to a problem that stems from the government itself and the attitude to accountability.

Consultation has been forgotten by this government and we are offered no guarantees that this bill won't be more of the same exercises in grandstanding, wedging Ontarians against each other, or chasing positive press over good policy.

I also wish to thank my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings for delivering the response to the minister's statement in the Legislature on May 3 while I was being briefed by ministry staff on the proposed law. We have been assured by the minister and her staff that this bill is consistent with initiatives undertaken in other provinces to regulate cellphone contracts, and I, for one, would appreciate being able to take them at their word. However, I can't, and I will explain why.

There are many proposals for improving cellphone service in Ontario and Canada. Some are radical, some less so. It is useful in this regard to examine the comment sections of various news websites that deal with cellphone regulation stories. One often cited is the abolition of the three-year term and the mandating of a maximum 24 months for a contract. In the context of easier and less hassling cancellations, such a proposal becomes redundant, but if it were implemented, it would not be beneficial to the consumer. Three-year terms are not an ideal agreement to begin with. Smart phones have a shorter shelf life than that; the warranty does not extend that long; and if the customer requires a newer handset, it usually comes with a brand new agreement. I don't see the need to examine that proposal, and I hope the government is going to be taking my same advice.

Other proposals include mandatory unlocking of the mobile device once it is paid off or the contract is up. The argument on the consumer side is that should a device last that long and be paid off through consumer compliance with the contract terms, it should become his property. The original bill by the member from Sault Ste. Marie included such a provision, yet is nowhere to be found in Bill 82. It may have been an omission or the result of consultations with the industry. In any case, it is a proposal we are open to. When we examine the speed at which technologies develop, combined with the shorter life of most high-technology gadgets, following a two- or three-year term, the original device will have to be depreciated significantly. Moreover, it would have been superseded by newer and more attractive models and therefore of little market value.

The prospect of an unlocked smart phone at the end of a term could also be an encouragement for consumers to take greater care of their devices. We are sometimes treated to offers of no-questions-asked warranties on some goods which include repairs due to mishandling by the owner. On its surface, it's a godsend for the consumer, who won't need to worry about his or her choices and any decisions. But in the long run, it is an excuse for waste.

This leads me to another issue at play in this bill and the debate that surrounds it. The PC Party, more than anyone else in this chamber, has always stood on the side of personal freedom, choice and responsibility. We're also the party that first acknowledges that a truly efficient market in any industry is founded on rules and transparency. I am concerned that the government's intent with this bill is not just to create a transparent marketplace but to fool consumers. The rhetoric I hear from this

government's benches is that the consumer is always right and the cellphone company is always wrong. I will therefore reference the same annual report from the complaints commissioner that the ministry so eagerly justifies this bill with.

Case study 1, concerning Internet service: "The consumer was receiving Internet service from a participating service provider that permitted the customer to use 25 GB of data each month. A few months after subscribing for the service, the customer began downloading movies and songs from the Internet. By his estimate, he downloaded approximately 100 movies and 300 songs during the month, in addition to web surfing, emailing and other activities.

"He later received a bill for about \$250 for additional data usage not included in his plan.

"The customer's complaint was that he should not have to pay the bill as he did not realize that downloading movies and songs from the Internet would consume such a large amount of data. During the course of our investigation, we found that the customer's service provider had an online tool by which customers can check to see how much data they have used. However, the customer claims that he was not made aware of the existence of this tool.

"We concluded that it was the customer's responsibility to monitor his usage, in particular given the significant change in the nature of his use. This is particularly important in cases such as this where the customer was unsure of how much data he was using when downloading movies and songs. Thus we did not recommend that the service provider waive the charges."

Simply put, the watchdog is telling us, "Consumer beware."

This principle applies to smart phones as much as it does to Internet services. Our own BlackBerrys have several applications on them that consume large amounts of data whenever they are active, including when they work in the background. Also, some applications may begin charging user fees the moment they are opened, whether intentionally or by accident.

In this context, the government will not be telling consumers the whole story. Section 13 of this bill deviates from the models adopted by Quebec and Manitoba and the model possibly undergoing discussion at the CRTC. It is the part of the bill that requires cellphone companies to inform the user when they are about to reach their maximum allowed use, whatever service they are subscribed to. It will not change any provision regarding application user fees or provide relief for a customer who has found himself out of data halfway through the month.

Speaker, I wish the government would reconsider this section even before the bill reaches committee stage, for reasons that would become very obvious to anyone reflecting on this matter. The bill is about 135 inches long, give or take a few, yet the section of this bill that deals with the ministry's *raison d'être* for this bill is only 1.25 inches long. The source of the largest and most widely publicized so-called cell shock is over-usage charges. Such charges for voice and text tend to be fairly contained and not entirely shocking.

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To put things in context, one needs to talk six hours within a month above one's allotted minutes to incur an overage charge of \$100. Data is a lot easier to lose track of, something the commissioner expresses quite clearly as well. Allow me to quote: "In other contexts where consumers are making purchases of a product sold in units, or that has to be measured, consumer is able to verify the accuracy of the measurement, more or less, based on their personal experiences. For example, consumers have a sense of what a pound, kilogram or litre represents. In addition, standardized measurement tools (for example, in gas pumps or on weight scales) are available to support the transaction. This allows consumers to have confidence that they are actually receiving what they are paying for.

"This also applies to other telecom services. When a customer makes a long-distance call, he is billed by the minute (or the second). Customers generally have a sense of how long the call is "and can assess the amount they are billed for the long-distance call in light of that experience (and their phone probably also measures the length of the call!). Unfortunately, consumers cannot rely in the same way on their experience to measure a megabyte or gigabyte as they do a pound, kilogram or litre, since data is not a tangible product."

Let's be very clear and realistic before we continue: Nothing in the cellphone world is truly unlimited. The transmission capacity of our existing infrastructure and using our existing technologies is a set amount. It's undoubtedly large enough to satisfy the current demand of Canadian consumers, but there is nonetheless a limit to it. Because it is scarce, the exchange of data to and from smart phones carries a price. I will not delve into debates on whether or not data plans available in Canada are priced fairly. It is beyond the point. A telling trend from the past few years had unlimited data plans broadly available within an affordable price range. It contributed to a rapid penetration of smart phones and quasi-smart phones into the Canadian market. The same companies today will not likely offer similar service, or if they do, they will place certain limits on them. For instance, a common fair-use policy will have the user transferred to a slower data exchange server once his or her monthly usage exceeds a certain amount.

Cellphones today are becoming more like computers than phones. Moreover, 3G networks are being used by tablet devices as well, capable of performing very data-intensive tasks.

I will quote just one example: Watching a video on a BlackBerry screen will likely use 10 to 15 times less data than streaming the same video on an iPad. The uptake of data services is fast and the infrastructure needs expanding, so I predict we can expect greater limits on data plans in the future or a slower network. This preamble is essential if we are to discuss the sort of cell shock the minister is attempting to tackle.

Data on a cellular plan is a resource to be used wisely and sparingly, and the consumer must always be aware of

the terms and definitions used in the industry. This issue is fairly new, and as a matter of fact, there is still confusion amongst insiders themselves regarding the estimated data usage of an average smart phone user. Some claim a standard Web page can weigh as much as four megabytes. An online usage estimator provided by Virgin Mobile suggests that a user visiting 10 Web pages a day and sending 10 emails a day from a non-BlackBerry smart phone will use 50 megabytes per month. When we are faced with such conflicting evidence, users should take control of their smart phone and be proactive. The government does not need to impose an additional requirement upon cellphone providers, particularly one beyond the scope of Quebec, Manitoba and federal regulations, if this market has already provided an alternative.

A simple Google search for “data traffic monitoring apps” will show that independent application developers have already created dozens of either free or cheap apps that measure a phone’s data traffic. Some go as far as including used text messages and voice minutes. They are available on all platforms, including iPhones, BlackBerrys and Androids.

According to the CWTA, implementing an early warning system on the operator side would cost anywhere close to \$100 million per operator. If every Canadian customer bought a 99-cent app to monitor his or her data use and made a habit of checking it frequently, the total cost to the entire Canadian market would be \$30 million.

On one hand, the government tries to fix a problem that stems from ill-informed consumers. On the other, the market already provides a cheap alternative. Roaming data charges can be avoided simply by disabling that feature in the phone’s settings. I can do that with a BlackBerry in less than a minute. The take-home message for this government is, don’t fix it if there’s an app for it.

Lastly, I would touch on the renewal clause, section 15. This is a particularly vague clause that could cost us dearly unless it is clarified. Today, once one’s fixed-term agreement is up, the contract usually becomes a month-to-month agreement on the same terms until such time as the user or the provider decides to terminate. It ensures a smooth transition out of a fixed-term contract into the freedom of no-strings attached service. Shy of including an automatic transition clause into the original agreement, the user would see his or her service cut the moment the contract runs out. If they wanted to avoid such a headache, the user might need to sign a new month-to-month contract with his or her provider. No one can guarantee the same terms, prices or services the user subscribed to will be available the next time.

Putting it bluntly, this clause denies consumers the option of continuing on their present terms in a month-to-month agreement and gives everyone one more headache to deal with. I’m sure it’s not the minister’s intention, and I look forward to the corresponding amendments to section 15.

During our discussion, I cited a friend of mine who has a phone, and I’m sure it’s three years that he has been working on the month-to-month contract. To many

people, it doesn’t make sense, but for a lot of people, when the contract runs out, they just want to continue the service.

Most of us are leading busy lives and appreciate peace of mind. Not having to worry about your contract ending is, by all measures, an improvement in a consumer’s peace of mind.

Let me be clear: Automatic renewals for a fixed term longer than 30 days should not be allowed.

Law-making is not about taking shots in the dark or throwing spaghetti on the wall and seeing if it sticks. Bill 82 needs to strike a very delicate balance between the interest of the consumer, the needs of the industry and the mandate of the CRTC. It seems to have been drafted in a hurry, rushed out of the gate before the media could focus on the CRTC consultations, and based on evidence that does not stand the test of reasonableness.

Furthermore, the principle behind the bill could well be applied to other telecommunications industries, including the provision of broadband Internet services.

Three case studies in the commissioner’s annual report deal not with smart phones but with Internet users who did not realize how much data they had been using and were hit by over-usage charges.

Once the Bill 82 media cow runs dry, the media will come up with band shock, specifically targeting the broadband sector. This isn’t a case of “we ought to have a law.” The laws that would truly reform the cellphone market in Canada can only be made in Ottawa. On our end, we can look out for our consumers and protect them against clear abuses and unreasonable charges, such as cancellation liabilities.

We in the PC caucus will ensure that this government does not let its new law-making instinct become biased against industry in order to score some brownie points with the Toronto Star.

Ten million people in this province will be affected by this law. The legislative precedent it sets will affect many more in other industries that are not yet regulated according to the principles of Bill 82. We must proceed carefully, listen to advice, examine every proposal and think outside the box.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important bill for the Canadian public, and we in the PC Party are saying that the committee stage will be very important. We need ample time to listen to consumers as well as the industry to make sure we don’t make errors that we will pay for in the future.

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Being from the industry, I know that infrastructure investment is crucial in this regard. We don’t want to fall behind other countries in the world where there is sufficient investment in their infrastructure. We’re now moving to 4G service, which gives us all kinds of possibilities. In a lot of ways, coming from a rural area, I would like to see this industry regulated to encourage investment in areas where they do not have cell service today. Cell service today is a great alternative to broadband services in areas where wired service is not a possi-

bility. It's not as good and it's not as cheap, but it's an alternative, and it is becoming, as I said in my speech, an economic equalizer.

Areas without broadband service or cell service are really being held behind. I think that one area we can look at is making sure that all areas of this province are serviced to the maximum that we can afford. I believe we can do that more through enticing industry, private industry, to go out and service these areas through different plans, like the plan we have in eastern Ontario, through the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. We're looking at servicing all of eastern Ontario. More plans like that through western Ontario and northern Ontario would service the province well.

So I look forward to the committee stage of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry on his inaugural speech. I know that the member and the member from London–Fanshawe, when we were out at the cattlemen's event earlier this week, talked about our large families. I come from a family of seven—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Hey, me too.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —and the member from London–Fanshawe from a family of six siblings. So we were talking about the struggles that our parents had trying to raise that many children and send them off to college and university. But I'm sure that your family and friends are very proud of you, and I thank you for sharing with us today your political and your work successes over the years.

I also have a moment here just to speak about the bill. I've got a little story about the cancellation piece, their not being up front when they tell you when your plan might be cancelled. I just happened to find myself on a deserted highway in Oregon, only to have no cell phone service because I was never told that, after you reached I think it was \$300, your service would be cut off, whether or not you were behind in your bill. So here I was, in Oregon, at night, broken down, and I didn't have any cell phone service. When I contacted them later, I said, "You cut my service off." They said, "Well, we sent you an email." I said, "Well, I know. You may have, but, in fact, I didn't have any email service, I didn't have any phone service, and my vehicle wasn't working."

That's one of the kind of hidden things that nobody discloses to you. So of course, from that point on, I actually had it billed to my credit card so that I didn't find myself in that situation again.

So I look forward to further debate on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Madam Speaker, it was a very, very thoughtful presentation this morning, the maiden speech for the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. He shared a lot of his personal experience and indeed his political experience.

I take great interest, of course—he talked about one of the most famous regiments during the Second World War, the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders. Many young men from Peterborough were members of that famous regiment. Indeed, I see my friend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and not only was his father a very distinguished member of this House, but he was a very brave member of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders.

It's ironic: Tomorrow, Madam Speaker, we celebrate the 68th anniversary of Normandy. It's interesting, over the last number of years, Canadian history books on the Second World War have retitled a famous photo. Many of us will recall there's a landing craft at Juno Beach which, for many decades, was attributed to the South Saskatchewan Regiment, but in recent years, that has now been relabelled, because we found out that, indeed, that was the landing craft of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders. That correction has been made in Canadian history books.

Indeed, their history was very interesting, post-Normandy. They were involved, of course, in the decisive battle at Caen. Then they were instrumental during the famous closure of the Falaise Gap, which led to the advancement of the allied armies through France and, ultimately, for the SD&Gs to go into Holland and then into northern Germany.

In fact, the history of that regiment, centred in Cornwall, is unique. When you look at the battles and awards of honour after the Second World War, the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders won a significant number of those battle honours in some of the toughest battles around. So I appreciate the member talking about that history.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to provide a few moments of comment on the inaugural speech for the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and also his comments on Bill 82.

He's my neighbour. He's just east of my riding, and we deal with each other quite a lot. In fact, the member has a very distinguished career, coming to this place from being the mayor of South Glengarry. He brings with him this very calm, cool and collected way about him. He delivers—

Interjection: His demeanour.

Mr. Steve Clark: His demeanour, yes.

He mentioned his years with Bell, and I know that for a time he did work in my riding, in his younger, perhaps wilder days.

He brought forward a number of comments this morning on Bill 82 that I think are extremely important and I hope are dealt with during committee. I'm not a big fan of too many regulations. In fact, I favour education instead. For a time, in the mid-1990s, I was involved with the Internet business. I know that some of the points he made about cellphone shock with the bill were certainly evident as people became more comfortable with the

Internet. I found that when I was in that business, we had to spend a lot of time with people, educating them about the bills and the charges, to try to help them work through as they became more comfortable. This technology has evolved greatly over the years from when a cellular phone, or a car phone, as they were called at the time, had a huge box that would fill your trunk.

I believe that during committee stage, we really need to take into consideration some of Mr. McDonell's comments and bring those forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comment?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I did want to make comments on Bill 82, the bill that's being presented and debated, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012.

One thing that came to my mind is how we're communicating today, compared to just a few generations ago for my mom and dad. My parents communicated with the old rotary phone—it was black—and that was the most basic level of communication that we had. Of course, there was also the verbal. When you went to your friend's house after school, you had to let them know where you were. Otherwise you called in, and hopefully they were home so that they knew your whereabouts.

My generation, my kids—I started with the computer and the big cellphone, the car phone that the other member just mentioned. It was really heavy to carry and very cumbersome. Today's generation that we're talking about now—I mean, you don't see a child—maybe starting at the age of 13, they have their own cellphone, and that's the way parents are communicating with their children and they're keeping tabs on their children, so to speak. Where are their whereabouts? They don't have to worry about calling home and Mom and Dad knowing their whereabouts. They can just give them a quick text.

The generation that we're facing today, they are becoming dependent on this type of service. If we don't have the contracts and the agreements that are going to be fair to consumers, so that the agreements have clarity and clairvoyance and the charges are reasonable, then it's going to make it harder for people to stay in touch and be communicating. Also, it's going to be difficult for people to actually have faith in that contract and that they're not going to get ripped off, so to speak. It has to be a fair contract, and the services that they're getting—their payments, the cancellation fees—it has to be a fair system so people can afford to stay in communication with each other. It is an affordability issue, because that's the way people are communicating in this generation. We have to look after that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to thank the honourable members from Welland, Peterborough, Leeds—Grenville and London—Fanshawe for their comments.

A couple of interesting points: The SD&G Highlanders is a famous regiment and one that's very near and dear to residents of my community. He talked about the

renaming of the ship at D-Day. It was through the perseverance of Bill Shearing, who was the honorary colonel, who noticed that. It took quite a few years, even though the physical evidence was overwhelming. It's funny sometimes how the military can be very slow to change things.

The first Canadian recipient of the Victoria Cross was actually from my hometown and in that regiment: Claude Nunney, who had emigrated from Ireland. He must have had quite a distinguished career, because he went from private to sergeant a few times, and back and forth. At the time of the award, he was actually a private again. But his bravery was well noted and received—I think the only Canadian to receive three full battle awards, the Victoria Cross being one of them.

I know my time is short, but just on the cell bill and that type of technology and how it changes: It's interesting. A few years ago, I was in a meeting in Montreal, and we were trying to figure out where the growth was going, and it was just killing our equipment. I went back home. My daughter was home from university, and she was watching a movie on her computer at the table. So I was talking to her and I said, "Where did you get the movie?" She said, "Oh, I'd like to watch a show but I have a class so I just downloaded it from the Internet. It may take 10 hours, but it doesn't really matter." I said, "Well, how would you do it?" She said, "I just go to the website, click this and it's done." I got back to the meeting and I said, "We're thinking this is tough to do? This is so easy that I'm surprised everybody's not doing it."

That's just an example of where this technology is going, where the usage is going, but, probably more importantly, where we want to be with it.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I would like to introduce two people from my riding—I won't hit on your parade earlier—Karen and Mike Vecchio are here from St. Thomas. Karen works for our MP Joe Preston and does a wonderful job. Mike Vecchio is a strong supporter of our community. I welcome them both here.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to introduce Christine Hart, who is here today. She's the mum of Katie Mowat, a page from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, who is page captain today. Christine is the former Liberal MPP for York East. She's here to celebrate her daughter and we recognize her today.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to welcome Clifton Foo and Michael Anderson, constituents from my riding in the Speaker's gallery, and I'll be enjoying dinner with them.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's my pleasure to introduce Mary Beth Walsh, who is in the members' east gallery today,

who is the mother of page Colin Walsh from the great riding of Peterborough.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to say today that a page from my riding, Anthonie Korstanje, is the page captain and he is joined today, to watch him exercise his duties as page captain, by his proud mum, Angela Korstanje, his dad, Joe Korstanje, his brother Joshua Korstanje and aunt Adrienne Hol. Welcome here to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to introduce Meghan Walker and Alison Dantis from the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors. They're hosting a lunch reception today from the end of question period until 2 p.m., and I'd encourage all members to attend.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would like members to welcome, from the Yukon, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Tourism and Culture, the Honourable Mike Nixon, who is in your Speaker's gallery.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I take this opportunity to invite all members of the Legislature to welcome some dear friends who hail from the great and extremely well-served riding of Etobicoke North, and they are Mr. Jack Helferty, Ms. Pauline Helferty and future parliamentarians David and Nicolas Malcolm.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to introduce today in the public galleries some graduate students from McMaster University, with Dr. Henry Jacek.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome Mrs. Zezima's grade 5 class from Oriole Park Junior Public School this morning, from my riding of St. Paul's. The class is here this morning to watch question period and tour the Legislature.

Mr. Frank Klees: It's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Ted Greig in the west gallery. Ted is the husband of Neave Greig, who is my constituency assistant in Aurora. Welcome, Ted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: This week 35 years ago, a young man joined us at the Ontario Legislature. The member from St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley, is celebrating 35 years as a distinguished member of the Ontario Legislature. Could we all rise for Mr. Bradley?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank the member for Peterborough for stirring it up.

On a personal note, I think that all of us would be so lucky to be able to serve the province of Ontario as this man has done and as all of us have on an ongoing basis. It is a testimony to the longevity of the member from St. Catharines.

That wasn't a point of order and it's out of order, so we'll move on.

I too have some introductions to make. It is customary for the Speaker, so I will be repeating some of the invitations that have already gone through.

Christine Hart from York East in the 33rd and 34th Parliaments: We welcome Christine to the House. We thank you for being here.

Again, to reinforce what has already been done, we have in the Speaker's gallery today the Honourable Mike

Nixon, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Minister of Justice and the MLA for the riding of Porter Creek South, Yukon. Welcome.

One that I'm glad what you've all left me is, my other brother Joe is here again. Thank you, Joe.

We don't know who the other guy is—oh, no, wait a minute; we do have to do that properly. What we have here is the former member from Elgin-Middlesex-London in the 37th, 38th, 39th and the Speaker of the House of the 39th Parliament, Mr. Steve Peters. Thank you for joining us, Steve.

I'm sure we all want to join Steve this afternoon when we hang him in the hallway. His official portrait will be unveiled this afternoon at 2 o'clock.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just noticed that Rev. Dr. Brent Hawkes is here from Metropolitan Community Church. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the Ontario PCs remain very concerned about the hollowing out of the manufacturing sector under your leadership. We believe that better days are ahead if we make the right choices to get our fiscal house in order, to make energy reliable and affordable and to actually lower taxes and the red tape burden.

We saw 2,000 jobs lost on Friday at the Oshawa GM plant. The Chevy Equinox, Speaker, was an Ontario icon. If you drove the Equinox anywhere in North America, it was made here in Ontario, made by Oshawa workers and families. The announcement on Friday is that that production will now take place in Tennessee in a reopened plant.

Premier, isn't this a clarion call that we need to change course? Why are we hemorrhaging jobs across the border into Tennessee? We want to see them working here in Ontario.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the question raised by my honourable colleague, but I do want to once again gently confront him with the statement made by his honourable colleague who sits one, two, three, four to his left, who said, and I quote from the Toronto Sun, "Ontario's auto bailout was a bad idea, and the province should have just stood aside and let Chrysler and General Motors go bankrupt."

Speaker, we bring a decidedly different approach. We have, in fact, invested in the future of the auto sector in Ontario.

GM has invested in a new transmission line in St. Catharines, for 300 new jobs. They have invested \$96 million to expand capacity at the CAMI plant. Toyota has created 400 new jobs, Speaker, at their Woodstock plant. Ford has put in place a third shift at their Essex engine

plant; that's 100 new jobs. Honda has added 400 jobs. Chrysler has invested \$27 million in jobs—all since the recession, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the workers at GM in Oshawa were confronted Friday with the news that they would lose 2,000 jobs. These are good middle-class jobs that help to build those communities and build our province.

The problem is, this is not the only one. We're seeing our manufacturing sector hollowed out. It's not like it's going over to Third World countries for cheap labour; it's crossing the border into Quebec, into Tennessee, into Indiana. This is a significant problem, and you dismiss it with your silly games.

Let me tell you about the Chevy Impala as well. This is one of the most popular family cars in the US. It made Wall Street's top 10 best-selling cars of all time: 14 million units sold. It was made here in Ontario, in Oshawa, but as of Friday the answer is: no more. It's moving to Michigan.

Premier, why is this happening over and over again? Why are good jobs leaving Ontario and going to the United States or Quebec?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, it's always good to get my honourable colleague's perspective, but I think we should hear from a few others in the private sector. Bombardier, one of our strongest global champions—there was a speech delivered just last week on the occasion of Bombardier's 20th anniversary in Ontario. This is what the CEO for Bombardier said: "We continue to believe that manufacturing in Ontario makes sound business sense and that it has a bright future. The province's fundamental strengths create an excellent jurisdiction for innovative, capital-intensive manufacturing. These strengths include a very skilled and adaptive workforce, a top-notch research infrastructure and a supportive policy environment. These are the reasons that brought" Bombardier "to Ontario and have kept us here."

I'm with Bombardier. I'm with continuing growth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you're missing my point altogether. We are listening to the private sector, and they've cast their votes: 300,000 manufacturing jobs have left our province under your leadership. Why have they done that?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Your skyrocketing hydro bills, your increasing swamp of red tape that bogs them down whenever they want to open up a new plant, expand a facility. It's not simply the 2,000 jobs in Oshawa. That's bad enough. But we saw in Timmins the Xstrata plant move 100 or so kilometres across the border into Quebec because of your energy policies. We saw recently the bearing maker Timken closing a plant in St. Thomas.

Navistar closed their plant in Chatham and went to Indiana—675 jobs there; Cat out of London, heading to Indiana.

Premier, we're hemorrhaging good jobs. These are jobs that build the middle class, give them security and help people climb the economic ladder. Isn't this a clear signal that something has gone off the rails? We need a fresh approach: more reliable, affordable hydro, lower taxes and a pro-growth, pro-jobs government. Why don't you understand this and why—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's hard to figure out where my honourable colleague is coming from, because on the one hand, he says that we need to do more to support economic growth and new jobs in Ontario; on the other hand, he says when it comes to partnering business, when push comes to shove, when it comes to standing up for the auto sector—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: When it comes to the southwestern Ontario economic development fund, he is opposed to that. Speaker, last week—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: They don't want to hear, but there is unavoidably more good news. Last week, Telus announced that their workforce, which has grown from zero to 8,000 since the year 2000—they've invested \$22 billion since the year 2000—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Try again.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, just last Friday in Ottawa, Telus announced that they're going to invest yet \$650 million more to create 900 more jobs on top of the 8,000 they've created since the year 2000. The fact of the matter is that the economy is moving in the right direction.

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier on this theme of the hollowing out of our manufacturing and resource sector in Ontario. I'm incredulous that the Premier doesn't even bat an eye at the loss of 2,000 good middle-class jobs in Oshawa and at what has happened in Timmins and southwestern Ontario. The Premier's solution seems to be that we're all going to go work down at the wind farm one day, we're all going to work for the wind turbine company, but that has been a dramatic failure. I don't think anybody believes the Premier that his HST tax increase created 600,000 jobs. I don't think anybody believes the Premier that his Feed-in Tariff program created 50,000 jobs; in fact, it's costing us jobs. The Feed-in Tariff program is one of the most disastrous, wrong-headed, job-killing programs in the history of the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, the second time.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—we know that you'll be signing a deal between Samsung and Six Nations in a disputed area. Premier, please tell me that you are reviewing this latest deal between Samsung and Six Nations outside of Caledonia.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think Ontarians could be forgiven for being confused on what position my honourable colleague takes from one day to the next. He says now that we need to do more to support the auto sector, but as I say, when push came to shove, when it came time to provide real economic support to protect—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Nepean—Carleton, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty:—400,000 jobs-plus, he was missing in action. When it came to laying shape to our budget so that we could work together to build a stronger Ontario economy and create—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You promised 650,000 jobs, and we're losing them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. The member from Nepean—Carleton. I will now start identifying individual members.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague from the Ottawa area is taking out her anger on her colleague to her immediate left, Speaker—me—today, and I just don't think that's fair.

Whether we're going to support the auto sector or not, that's a position which varies from day to day with my honourable colleague, as it does when it comes to the HST—by the way, a measure which was wholeheartedly endorsed by the auto sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, the only thing confusing, Speaker, is that the Premier, whose policies of high energy rates, more red tape and higher taxes have cost us 300,000 manufacturing jobs, wants to double down on policies that fail economic sense.

I want to talk particularly about your Samsung deal. The Samsung deal is a bad deal for Ontario families, and now, as part of your Samsung deal, you're working out a contract with Samsung and Six Nations to build the world's largest wind and solar projects on crown land, government-owned land, ORC land as well as disputed land, potentially. I remind you that there's been an occupation in Caledonia now for six years. As part of your deal with Six Nations and Samsung, we'll be seeing millions and millions of dollars, in fact \$55 million, in payments going to Six Nations. Before you proceed with your deal, Premier, don't you think it's time to say, "End the occupation. Get off the land before you get \$55 million from Ontario?"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well, it took us a while to get there, Speaker, but I thought this line of questioning had to do with strengthening the economy—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty:—and creating more jobs and building more opportunities for all Ontarians. I thought that's what that line of questioning was, and that is an honourable line of questioning, Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will not shrink from our responsibility to continue to find ways to grow this economy. We will continue to aggressively pursue clean energy in Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will continue to find ways to work with our First Nations community and create opportunities for young people—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham, order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty:—growing up in those communities, just as we will for our young people—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Northumberland, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty:—growing up right across the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I take it the Premier's answer to my question is no, that he won't suspend this deal until he cleans up the six-year occupation in Caledonia.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Peterborough, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The problem is, Premier, that your Feed-in Tariff program, your expensive subsidies for wind and solar projects, is driving out good jobs like we had at GM—2,000 jobs gone. They are a major abrogation of local property rights, and split communities. And you have six years of occupation going on in Caledonia. This is a very deadly mix that actually is going to hurt job creation in the area and exacerbate an ongoing occupation on the Caledonia Douglas Creek Estates.

It seems to me simple: Before you proceed with this deal—in fact, we think it's a bad deal altogether—say you won't give the \$55 million until we end the ongoing occupation at Douglas Creek Estates. Isn't six years, Premier, quite long enough?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, it was my understanding there's supposed to be some even tenuous connection between the beginning of a line of questions and the conclusion of the line of questions. We started off by talking about the economy and jobs; now we're talking about an alleged occupation. But Speaker, let me respond to that. We will continue to bring goodwill to these

circumstances. I will invite my honourable colleague to encourage his federal counterparts to roll up their sleeves, to work in earnest and to resolve a problem that predates Confederation, Speaker. In the meantime, we will do everything that we can to ensure that we bring goodwill and find common ground.

POWER PLANT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. We know that the OPA has offered a New York hedge fund more than \$80 million to make your headaches with the Mississauga gas plant go away. They didn't take the money, but Greenfield, the company that was building the plant, has been receiving public money. My question, Speaker, to the Premier is, how much has the government paid off to Greenfield so it can not build a power plant?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Last September, this party did make a commitment that we would not proceed with the gas plant in Mississauga on the site—a commitment, I might add, that was immediately confirmed and accepted by the two parties opposite. At no point have they ever suggested that they would not have done exactly what we're doing.

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There are a number of discussions and lawsuits at which the interests of the people of the province of Ontario are being represented. I look forward to a point at which we're able to speak to the conclusion of the discussions from the various other proceedings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order—second time.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, back to the Premier: The Minister of Energy has refused to talk about this fiasco at committee, and the government is stonewalling at every turn. But information is available on the public record. In court proceedings in New York, in May, lawyers for Greenfield stated, "OPA is advancing money to Greenfield to pay ... vendors." How much has the government and the OPA paid to Greenfield so far?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: My friend the leader is correct in suggesting that there are legal proceedings on both sides of the border relating to the decision not to proceed with the gas plant on the Mississauga site, a decision that reflected a lot of input from the community of Mississauga and the western GTA, a decision that was immediately accepted and endorsed by the leader's party and the Leader of the Opposition. Those proceedings are ongoing. They are obviously very complex and technical. The interests of the people of the province of Ontario are being represented through them, and it would be best to speak to them at the conclusion of the proceedings so we continue to protect the interests of the people of the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the correct thing about the statement of the minister is that New Democrats don't support private power deals no matter where they take place, so we didn't support that from day one.

The government claims, though, that it can't comment about the specifics, but the facts are already in the public record. The government claims the public doesn't need to know, but they're spending the people's money, not their own money. This is yet another example of a private power mess that's making life more expensive for the people in this province who are picking up the tab and who are paying the bills.

If the government refuses to tell people how much money has been spent so far, will they let Ontario's auditor review the mess and tell us how much of our money has been wasted?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Our position throughout is that we've listened very carefully to the people of Mississauga. The western GTA decided not to proceed with that plant, and the interests of the people of the province of Ontario, including the monetary interests, are being represented and protected at the proceedings on both sides of the border and in some separate, confidential, very sensitive negotiations and discussions. It would be unhelpful to speak to part of it, allegations of part of it because it would inevitably accrue to the detriment. It would harm the interests of the families and businesses in Ontario, and we won't do that. We'll continue to protect and represent them and hope—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Prince Edward-Hastings, come to order.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: —look forward to speaking to this when I'm in a better position to do so.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: With a protection like that, Speaker, we're all in trouble.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. A review of the government's local health integration networks was supposed to happen over two years ago. In fact, it was postponed until July 2012. So my question is a very simple one: When is it going to start?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. We are committed to reviewing the LHINs. I think it's important that we do take a look and see what more we need to do to further strengthen the role of the LHINs in this province. We know that they have fundamentally changed how health care is delivered. We're now seeing hospitals, Speaker, with balanced budgets. We're seeing a much, much better integration of care—care that's

working for patients. So we will, of course, do what we are mandated to do when it comes to review of the LHINs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people are very worried about the state of Ontario's health care. They see growing wait times and cuts at hospitals, doctors who are unable to see patients, and unelected, unaccountable LHINs making more and more decisions. The LHIN review is a chance for all parties to work together, to actually start facing the challenges in our health care system in a collective way. Will this government move forward with the LHIN review, or will they continue to do the same old "my way or the highway" kinds of approaches that certainly have not been working so far?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I want to make it very clear that we will be reviewing the LHINs as per the legislation, and we very much look forward to the constructive input from people in this Legislature; most importantly, though, from people out there in Ontario who have first-hand experience with our health care system. There's nothing more important, in my opinion, about our transformation of health care than the integration of care so that it works for people. We have a wonderful health care system, but we know there's more we can do and the LHINs are really driving the change in our health care system. I look forward to the input of the party opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People stuck with long wait times or without a family doctor or home care support are really tired of being ignored. They know and we know that we can do better and that we need to do better, and the government can't simply sweep the problems under the carpet and pretend that they're not there. People are tired of an out-of-touch, arrogant government. They want to be heard and they want us to work together to actually tackle the challenges that we're facing.

My question is very specific: Will the Premier commit today that no new legislation on LHINs will move forward unless the long-delayed review actually takes place first?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I released our action plan for health care in January. Important elements of that are in fact what the member opposite is talking about. We need to strengthen home care. We need to strengthen community care. We have too many people in our hospitals who would much prefer to be home in their own bed rather than in a hospital. It is the LHINs that are driving that integration that is best for people. So we absolutely look forward to the input from both parties opposite as we look to how we can continue to improve care for the people of this province.

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Premier: We know, whether it be militant confrontations or imposing wind

turbines on unwilling communities, your knee-jerk reaction is to not only write a cheque but to give away the farm. Think of Douglas Creek Estates in Caledonia; or handing over 300 acres of the Burtch correctional property to Six Nations; and now laundering land-lease money from crown land at South Cayuga to Six Nations, all to buy peace for the Samsung deal in Haldimand county.

Six Nations elected Chief Bill Montour, is quoted in the Teka newspaper: "Through this process, the province of Ontario has admitted that Six Nations has land ownership."

Premier, there's no land claim at South Cayuga. Why would you set the precedent of assigning land-lease money to Six Nations?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm going to share the supplementary with my colleague the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. You know, the Samsung strategic investment in the province of Ontario presents a remarkable—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't like what I'm hearing.

Minister.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It presents a remarkable opportunity—an opportunity for the people of Ontario to receive the benefit of 16,000 jobs, \$7 billion worth of investment, and three manufacturing facilities already set up in Tillsonburg, in Windsor and in Toronto, with another one to come. It also presents an opportunity for those with whom Samsung and their partners will contract, an opportunity to benefit from the investment. Six Nations has reached an agreement, an arrangement with Samsung, that will provide many long-term benefits to Six Nations over the years to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Premier, here's your energy minister who had indicated the agreement has nothing to do with government. However, following your deal with Samsung and Six Nations, elected Chief Bill Montour said, "A letter from the Minister of Infrastructure states that the lease from the land surface will be turned over to Six Nations. That is unprecedented. They have always maintained that we have no right to that land."

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So which is it, Premier? Is the government involved in the agreement or not? Is this about handing over lease money to Six Nations or handing over crown land, all the while sticking Haldimand county with wind towers and property devaluations? As one of my constituents indicated, "They got the gold mine; we got the shaft."

Premier, the chief has the letter. Why has this land-lease precedent been set?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite is talking about specifics, and I think the Minister of Energy has addressed those.

What I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, is that the other thing that the member is talking about is a relationship and the relationship between government and First Nations, all of the First Nations in the Six Nations. I think what's happening is, we're the party that is implementing the recommendations of Ipperwash, as the Minister of Finance is saying. We are very clear that we need to work with all of the community and Six Nations. It's extremely important to the future economic development in that community that the government have a good working relationship, that Samsung is able to develop this project. But to have a local member who is doing nothing but dividing and stirring the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It has become evident to me that I will now start warning. You know: one warning only.

ARBITRATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Finally, after weeks of silence, the minister and the president of the Ontario Medical Association met and talked. Today, staff from both sides are continuing those preliminary talks. New Democrats are happy to see that the conversation has resumed, but the government's refusal of the OMA's request for a conciliator is sort of baffling. Can the minister explain why her government is so opposed to allowing a conciliator to help reach an agreement with Ontario physicians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I too am very pleased that the conversations are beginning to resume when it comes to achieving a negotiated arrangement with the Ontario Medical Association. I think the patients of this province expect government and the doctors to work together to land on what is right for the patients, Speaker.

We have made a decision. The decision is that we must address the most urgent priority in health care now, and that is, we need to strengthen community care; we need to strengthen home care.

We look forward to conversations with the doctors. We know we must reach an agreement, and I look forward to that happening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad the minister knows that she has to reach an agreement, because the Canada Health Act is clear in recognizing the value of conciliation, but this government has chosen to ignore this guideline and impose a unilateral agreement.

Now that the government is taking steps to go back to the negotiation table, will she accept the assistance of a conciliator between the Ministry of Health and the OMA?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again I thank the member for the question. I really would like to know what the NDP position is on this aspect of our budget, Speaker.

I think we all recognize that we are working very hard to get back to balance. All of us are doing our job, and that includes those who work in health care. We are choosing to protect the expenditures on physician compensation. We've invested in an increase of 85% since we came to office in 2003. We believe that any additional new money must be invested where it will make the greatest difference for patients, and that is in community care and home care.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Education. As you know, I sit on the Standing Committee on Social Policy. I've been there for the public hearings on Bill 13 and Bill 14, and I've been there for Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act.

A lot of public attention is being paid to the part of the bill to allow gay-straight alliances in Ontario schools. Just last Friday, I went to visit a school in my riding. It's a great high school called Blakelock. They have a GSA there in the riding. The kids basically said to me, "We don't know what the adults are all upset about here. We've been doing this for five years, and it's working."

Will the minister please tell this House clearly what Bill 13 says about gay-straight alliances?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you to the member for Oakville, who worked hard on this important piece of legislation.

During public hearings on Bill 13, we heard a number of deputations from Ontarians, from students, from teachers, from groups who work with youth and who are focused on creating a more safe and inclusive society. We heard from those deputants that it was important to ensure that students who want to establish a group like a gay-straight alliance in their school be supported to do that. We believe it's not up to us at Queen's Park to tell students how to name their clubs but that schools and school boards shouldn't prevent students from using the words that matter to them, like the students at Blakelock have chosen to do.

That doesn't mean that our government will force schools to have a GSA or a specific name of a student club. What we're saying here is that, if passed, Bill 13 will mandate that all schools will have to support students like those at Blakelock if they wish to form a student-led support group. They might call it the Rainbow Club, they might call it Born Equal or an anti-homophobia alliance. It's their club, after all, Speaker, and that's the way it should be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think a number of us were really proud to speak yesterday during third reading debate on this bill. I talked about how I believe every generation improves upon the conduct of the past. I spoke about how much I learned from my own son when

he was young about accepting and embracing people who are different, and I spoke about how I believe that kids lead us adults in social change.

Minister, I believe the Accepting Schools Act makes a very important statement. That statement is, bullying is simply not acceptable in our schools and that homophobic bullying also has no place in our schools.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, how does this bill help fight LGBTQ bullying in our schools?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to commend the member from Oakville for his remarks on third reading debate yesterday. I agree there's nothing radical about ensuring that students get the support that they need, and that's what the Accepting Schools Act is all about. Evidence and experience show us that peer-to-peer support like GSAs makes kids feel more accepted at school. That connection leads to academic success, and that's what our schools are all about. People for Education, in their recent report, found that 88% of students agree that students should have the right to establish gay-straight alliances at school. Many, many individuals, including John Tory, the former leader of the PC Party, have spoken in support of GSAs and kids being able to choose the name.

Last week, Ryerson University hosted a summit on LGBTQ suicides, sponsored by TD Bank. They brought experts from North America, and they came to discuss the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ youth. It's our responsibility to fight that in our schools, and that's what Bill 13—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. This weekly report prepared for cabinet provides an ongoing update of incidents involving our air ambulance service—accounts of pilots not available, paramedics not available, confused dispatch calls. According to the Premier, he doesn't recall ever seeing this report, and so apparently the Minister of Health hasn't thought it important enough to distribute to her cabinet colleagues.

If the Premier and his cabinet don't consider this important enough, I would suggest it would be good mandatory reading for every member of the Legislature and the public. Will the Premier agree to make this weekly report public so that we can know what's going on at Ornge without having to wait for brown envelopes from frustrated civil servants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, you know, when it comes to who's got credibility on this issue, we have the member from Newmarket—Aurora who is actually calling into question the credibility of the chief coroner of the province.

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It might be helpful to review the qualifications of the chief coroner of Ontario, Dr. Andrew McCallum. He's a

graduate of McMaster University's school of medicine. He served in the Canadian Forces as a medical officer and flight surgeon. He trained in emergency medicine at the University of Toronto. He is a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. He was a regional supervising coroner for eastern Ontario, adjunct associate professor of emergency medicine at Queen's University—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —chief of emergency medicine and chief of staff at Hamilton Health Sciences—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark will withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): He is now warned. Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —and an associate professor of medicine at McMaster University.

Speaker, the member opposite is attacking the credibility and the ability of Dr. McCallum—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I'm not sure which question the minister is answering, but it's not mine. And I will forgive the minister, because sometimes her notes get mixed up.

With every day that passes, the Premier, his minister and his cabinet are owning the scandal and mismanagement at Ornge. There's no reason for that. They boast of change, but most of the bodies who created the mess are still there. Rather than making meaningful change, we get meaningless legislation and redrafting of agreements.

Speaker, that's why 20 pilots and 11 aircraft engineers have left Ornge since January of this year.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order.

Mr. Frank Klees: They see that nothing of consequence has changed, and they refuse to be part of a dysfunctional organization. The consequences will be an exodus of more good front-line people. When will the Premier admit—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Frank Klees: —that his minister is incapable of managing this file?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it's clear that the member opposite is calling into question the professionals who are responsible for managing our health care system. He is doing this for clearly what is partisan political gain.

I think the people of this province are actually interested in knowing if Ornge is doing what they are supposed to be doing. Just yesterday, 49 people were

transported by Ornge; 42 patients were transported from one facility to another, six by land ambulance; six babies, pediatric patients, were transported by Ornge; and there was one incident where a helicopter attended to a scene.

Speaker, the front-line staff at Ornge are doing their job, despite the ongoing attacks of the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. When asked two weeks ago about the need to consult with the horse racing industry, the Minister of Finance claimed that he met with the Ontario Horse Racing Industry Association, saying that he “sought their advice on how to move forward.” In fact, the minister was referring to a \$500-a-head fundraiser he had held the previous night, and the individual he met with did not speak on behalf of OHRIA.

Does the Minister of Agriculture agree with the Minister of Finance’s new definition of consultation?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, obviously if you want to know the Minister of Finance’s position, you’ll have to ask him.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would offer all cabinet ministers and the Premier the advice that you just simply defer, as opposed to making any comments.

The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the OLG have, in fact, met with representatives of OHRIA throughout the process. I have met with them throughout the process. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and I will have a very significant announcement with respect to transition assistance to the industry in the very near future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, the folks in the horse racing industry are waiting to hear from their Minister of Agriculture as to the effects of this on rural Ontario. Obviously he’s not involved in any of the consultations either.

The government has promised to start consultations on the horse racing industry—something they should have done when they put thousands of jobs at stake—but they’ve yet to provide a firm date. People in the horse racing industry have only heard words like “in due course.” That’s simply not good enough.

When exactly will the Minister of Agriculture give these hard-working, dedicated business owners a date for consultations so they can make the business decisions they need to make?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the representatives of the horse racing industry, in fact, have said things about the member opposite. He promised them, in public, that the NDP would support more money for the industry, and then, when push came to shove, they didn’t. You

stood publicly at Windsor Raceway and you said that you, as part of the deal, would demand funding, and they didn’t. We have said from the beginning there will be transitional funding to the industry.

The member’s trying to have it both ways. He goes out in public and promises one thing, and he comes in the House—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville will withdraw.

Mr. Steve Clark: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: He comes to the House, and not only do they not put something in the budget deal, they don’t even vote for the budget, for or against it. They’re trying to have it both ways.

We have undertaken transition funding. The Minister of Agriculture and I will have more to say about that in the very near future.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: My question’s for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. Minister, we know that job growth and economic recovery can only come if jurisdictions can demonstrate and harness innovation and entrepreneurship in order to boost growth and employment.

Last week, I had the opportunity to attend a great event here in Toronto on behalf of our University of Windsor Centre for Engineering Innovation—and I often meet with innovators and businesses in Windsor. We know and believe that a strong, innovative economy that stimulates growth and creates high-quality jobs is critical if Ontario’s economy is going to remain competitive. The opposition continues to criticize our approach to the economy and job creation.

Minister, you have said that you have an optimistic forecast for the future of Ontario’s economy. Can you tell me specifically: What is the government doing to help entrepreneurs drive innovation and expand their companies?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the question. I want to say that I’m very optimistic about Ontario’s economic growth potential, driven very much by the innovative spirit of our business sector. Our Premier launched the province’s innovation agenda in 2005, and through it developed the Ontario Network of Excellence. This is a province-wide innovation initiative that helps—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew is now warned.

Hon. Brad Duguid: —entrepreneurs grow their ideas into businesses. No matter where Ontario’s technology-based businesses, entrepreneurs and researchers are located, Ontario’s Network of Excellence provides access to the programs and services that they need to bring their

ideas to market. By providing a team of experienced advisers, these centres help businesses through coaching, mentorship and assisting with setting goals.

I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, that through the Ontario Network of Excellence, all kinds of innovators are collaborating to spark new ideas across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thanks for the answer, Minister. We know that today's globalized economy requires companies that are forward-thinking, agile and able to compete internationally.

The question that we often get asked is, in terms of yearning to access international markets and reach new customers, how do we bring those innovative products to market? What is our government doing to help companies expand into the global market and what evidence is there to show that the work of the Ontario Network of Excellence is actually working?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That is a really good question. Let me tell you about InGamer Fantasy Inc. Just three years ago, this company—which illustrates precisely how our province is a leader in innovation. InGamer is a social fantasy sports game played during live sporting events. InGamer's co-founders were film and television producers, and neither had business backgrounds, but through the Ontario Network of Excellence, they were able to bring InGamer to the marketplace.

InGamer is currently expanding its product offering in an effort to increase sales and distribution in preparation for the US launch in September. No one else in North America does what InGamer does. In fact, InGamer is the only digital tech company in the world represented by IMG, the world's largest independent producer and distributor of sports programming.

InGamer is just one example of how we've worked to foster innovation through Ontario's Network of Excellence. We wish them success in their US launch.

1120

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Minister of Health: It was reported that the minister expressed considerable disbelief at revelations that the Mazza executive suite was still very much intact.

Let me introduce her to those Mazza loyalists, who were very much part of the Mazza scheme, and whose continued presence in the crystal palace are responsible for the exodus of pilots, paramedics and aircraft engineers who want nothing to do with the ongoing incompetence at Ornge: Dr. Sawadsky, the medical director who signed off on the medical interiors of the AW139s and who, the deputy minister testified, misled the ministry; and Steven Farquhar, the vice-president of operations, who was responsible for, among many other things, the decisions of signing off on those medical interiors, the downstaffing and launch policies and the mismanagement of the critical care land ambulance

program. These are the very individuals who have put patients' lives at risk.

How can the minister claim that there's a new management team when there's not?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, there is no question that there is a new board of directors in place at Ornge. There is no question about it that the senior leadership at Ornge is gone and is being replaced with new senior leadership.

There is also no question that the party opposite has been fully informed of changes at Ornge. Guy Giorno, Kelly Mitchell, Tom Lepine, Jacob Blum, Lynne Golding—I'm sorry, not Lepine—a number of prominent Conservatives have made it their business, Speaker, and have been handsomely paid to ensure that the members opposite actually were informed of changes at Ornge.

We are determined to continue to improve care at Ornge. We need Bill 50 to pass.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Just a little bit of advice for the minister: Perhaps she could consider asking for a list of the executives and managers responsible for medical and operational decisions before she took her so-called swift and decisive action. Then she could compare that to the current list of executives and managers who are responsible for those same responsibilities today.

Here are the names that she'll find on both: Dr. Bruce Sawadsky, medical director; Steve Farquhar, COO; Sandra Wilkie, quality assurance; Lindsey White, deputy director; Mark Repic, operations manager; Lisa Rutledge, operations manager. This is the reason that 20 pilots, 11 aircraft engineers and numerous paramedics have abandoned the embattled Ornge group since January of this past year: because they have seen that nothing has changed, and there are deep consequences.

This minister doesn't have control of her file. She needs to resign. Will you do it today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I understand that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West is now warned.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —the party opposite is playing a political game for partisan advantage. I can tell you that there are many issues in health care that I think would benefit from questions from the members opposite, but they continue to ask questions only on one narrow part—very important, but one part of our health care system.

I think it's important that we let the committee do its work. We have had 30 witnesses; the committee has sat for 24 hours. There are more hearings scheduled. Some of the witnesses being scheduled for upcoming hearings include Tony Clement, the former Minister of Health for the province of Ontario; Jacob Blum, former Ornge CFO;

and Bruce Tavender, Ornge VP of finance. A number of people, Speaker, are coming and testifying.

I look forward to the committee completing its work, but I absolutely must ask: Why are the members opposite blocking Bill 50? It's important legislation. We need it to pass.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. For over a week, the people of Thunder Bay have seen the worst of nature and the best of their neighbours. Record rainfall caused extensive flooding damage to private property and to public infrastructure. The people of Thunder Bay have pulled together to make the best out of a very bad situation, but they need a helping hand immediately from the province.

There's no question that Thunder Bay is a disaster area. When can city officials expect money to begin flowing to Thunder Bay from the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to take the opportunity—and I'm grateful that my honourable colleague has raised this matter—to commend the people of Thunder Bay and the surrounding communities who have worked so hard and pulled so well together at a time of great challenge.

I took the opportunity to speak with the mayor of Thunder Bay a few days ago and to encourage him and his council to apply for—I think they call it ODRAP—the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program. The council must pass a resolution in order to qualify for that.

We are, at this point in time, working with the community. The mayor placed a great deal of emphasis on a particular water treatment plant that represents a real challenge for them financially. I can say that we will continue to work hand in hand with the community to ensure that they get the support that they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last week, I wrote to the Premier's office calling for quick relief for flood-damaged Thunder Bay. City officials, first responders, utility crews and workers at the Atlantic Street pumping station have done an amazing job keeping people safe during the crisis.

The Red Cross, the Salvation Army, community groups and business associations are doing their part on the ground in that community. Neighbours are helping neighbours. When will the government step in with funding from the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program so that the people of Thunder Bay can get back to rebuilding their community?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to say that, as the Premier said, we are very much working with the people of Thunder Bay and the local members are working with their community. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is working with Emergency Management Ontario. Their assessment is going on. That's

what needs to happen before the applications to the ODRAP fund can take place.

There's actually nothing to prevent the city of Thunder Bay from taking action immediately, which I know that they are doing. But the assessments have to go on in order for the ODRAP fund to kick in. That's the process and what I am making sure—and I speak with my officials regularly on this. Our people are on the ground; Emergency Management Ontario is on the ground. Those assessments are going on so that those applications can be made once the council has taken their action.

SKILLS TRAINING

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, our government has worked hard to position our province to meet the demands of the new knowledge-based economy. In this new economy, Ontarians will be required to transition from the traditional work models to a knowledge-based economy that is ever-changing. The creativity and productivity of workers will be at the core of an organization's success.

Our government needs to ensure that we provide the help required for individuals to transition easily into our new economic landscape. This will help Ontario to continue to prosper.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, what will the minister do to help individuals transfer their skills, talents and wealth of knowledge into the new economy?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My friend is quite correct. We have come out of this recession with a very different economy than when we went into it.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's very clear that the opposition doesn't understand this, because they cut a half a billion dollars from universities and colleges. Through their entire period of time, university funding actually net declined, which created a crisis. Had they continued in power, we would have ended up without a recovery, because 70% of the jobs coming out of the recession require a university or college education and 81% of the folks who lost work during the recession did not have high school.

Our program, Second Career, right now has over 55,000 people who lost jobs, who didn't have those skills, who are now getting a university or college education and getting back into the economy, three quarters of them getting jobs through this program.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, Minister. The government's investment in post-secondary education shows that our priorities are the same as all Ontarians'. Higher education is the single most important investment that our children need to succeed. Minister, we know that more than 70% of the jobs will require post-secondary education in the future, and our government needs to take effective action to

increase the skilled workforce in our economies. Otherwise, we will be unable to fill the jobs of the future.

How is our government working to encourage our students to transition from our best English-speaking schools to our world-class post-secondary institutions?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's interesting. There was a time when you would go and work on an auto assembly line; you probably dropped out of high school. Today, you have to go to an institution like UOIT or Durham College and you have to do a degree or a diploma in robotics or in design.

Mr. Speaker, now 96% of our university graduates are employed within two years of graduating. Eighty-five per cent of them get a job in their field. That is an unprecedented achievement here in Ontario. Employment gains for those with post-secondary education accounted for 86% of the job gains over the last two years. I'll repeat that again, Mr. Speaker: 86% of the job gains in the last two years, which is over 345,000 jobs, require university or college. So while people are looking for low-value jobs over there, we've been busy creating—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Minister of Health. Minister, residents of northern Ontario now realize the Ornge scandal has hit home. They understand that helicopters were purchased that don't measure up to the medical requirements, and they've learned that a \$6-million kickback was made to one of Ornge's for-profit companies for that purchase. Now they've learned a long list of fateful northern incidents involving the shortcomings of that helicopter purchase. Recently, three northerners have died because the interior design of the helicopter did not allow for proper care.

Minister, you've known about this problem. Why haven't you done anything to fix it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would caution all of us not to jump to conclusions without knowing the facts. We rely on the chief coroner of Ontario to ensure that patients are getting the care they need. We have a very clear process, Speaker, where we do investigations of every complaint—thorough investigations. We've seen evidence of that. The coroner is notified whenever appropriate. Under the law, Speaker, the coroner is notified, reviews the information, can request more information, can do his own investigation, can order an inquest.

I simply caution these members to remember: These are real people we're talking about; these are real families.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Again to the minister: Let's look at the facts revealed to your cabinet. Last July 17 in Capreol, a patient died after the Ornge paramedics couldn't perform CPR due to the helicopter's interior. Two days later, in Parry Sound, the single paramedic on board the helicopter informed EMS that due to the inter-

ior design of the Ornge helicopter, he was unable to perform CPR, and that patient died too. In Timiskaming on October 22, responding to the collapse of a 14-year-old boy, the single paramedic on board the Ornge helicopter could not perform CPR. This patient also died.

Minister, northerners are dying due to this scandalous helicopter purchase, and this is happening under your watch. Knowing this, will you now admit failure and resign your post?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the earlier question, we are talking about real people with real families. I think those families deserve to hear the truth. They deserve to trust the information they're getting.

I rely on the chief coroner of the province of Ontario. He has the credibility. He has the skills. He reviews these cases thoroughly.

For me, I am nothing short of appalled by the politicization of this issue. I think it's important that we take our responsibility seriously and let the coroner do his work.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you announced yesterday that you're not going to move forward with major agencies as far as privatization without a vote in the House. Why do you treat northern Ontario differently and not allow the same rule to apply to northerners?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, we will be bringing forward amendments to committee on the budget bill to ensure that the process that we're already doing has enormous legislative scrutiny so that there's no uncertainty around that. Our undertaking is to look at all assets, all services of the government, make sure they're being run in a way that maximizes benefit to all Ontarians.

These are the choices we have made on a number of files. It's part of getting back to balance, part of being able to make investments in health and education, to protect the important gains we've made. I look forward to working with the third party on those amendments that will come forward on the budget bill.

I hope at the third reading opportunity when the budget bill comes up that, instead of sitting on their hands and doing nothing, the NDP will actually take a position.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You don't have to worry about New Democrats taking a position when it comes to the ONTC. We have said from the beginning that we oppose the privatization, and we urge this government to reverse itself.

But the question is this: You have agreed to insert in Bill 55 amendments that say that there's going to be a litmus test to any privatization. The first part is that you're going to have to refer the decision to committee and then to a full vote of this Legislature. You're then quoted in the paper as saying "no" for the ONTC, that you will not follow the same process.

If you want to have clarity, if you want to make sure things are done right, why do you have a rule that's different for northern Ontario than it is for the rest of this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Northern Development.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, let me quote from a letter to the editor that is in the Timmins Daily Press and posted 56 minutes ago:

"When the NDP had the chance to save ONTC by voting against the Liberal budget, they chose to abstain...."

"The NDP had the chance to kill the divestment by voting with the Conservatives...."

"They had that chance and yet they chose to do nothing."

"So please spare me your protests and ... rhetoric...."

"When one abstains, one chooses to sit on the fence. It says: 'You decide.'"

"However, when one abstains, it is similar to not voting and you have now lost the privilege"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's never too late to warn someone and it's never too late to name someone.

You have 10 seconds to wrap up.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: "If you didn't feel it was an important issue to either support or deny, then you really cannot complain about the outcome, can you?"

That's from Chris Loreto from Timmins.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from London—Fanshawe on a point of order.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to correct the record from June 4, page 2677. I'd like to correct it to say, "Earlier this year, the government said that over 300,000 students would benefit from the grant." Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order, and the member is allowed to correct her own record.

DEFERRED VOTES

ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 POUR DES ÉCOLES TOLÉRANTES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters / *Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait à l'intimidation et à d'autres questions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On June 4, Ms. Broten moved third reading of Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Forster, Cindy	Moridi, Reza
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Bentley, Christopher	Gélinas, France	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Natyshak, Taras
Best, Margaret	Horwath, Andrea	Oraziotti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Hoskins, Eric	Piruzza, Teresa
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Campbell, Sarah	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Schein, Jonah
Chan, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Chiarelli, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Coteau, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crack, Michael	Matthews, Deborah	Taylor, Monique
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Vanthof, John
Damerla, Dipika	McGuinty, Dalton	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
DiNovo, Cheri	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Elliott, Christine	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Hardeman, Ernie	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Harris, Michael	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hillier, Randy	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakubski, John
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haldimand—Norfolk

has given notice of his dissatisfaction with an answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy concerning the assignment of land-lease payments from the ORC land in South Cayuga to Six Nations. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

VISITOR

Mr. Bill Walker: Speaker, I'd like to offer a point of order. I inadvertently forgot to introduce another guest, Paul Osborn, from my riding.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my distinct pleasure—I won't take Vic's message here, but I want to introduce Jan Westcott, who is a good friend to all of us here in the Legislature, and his guest, Robert McPherson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Introduction of guests. The member for—

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Brampton West.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Brampton West. Thank you.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to welcome Rob McPherson, who's the managing director of Bacardi Canada, and Jan Westcott, CEO of Spirits Canada. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member; I had a blank. I apologize.

Introduction of guests. The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I'd just like to extend that. Robert McPherson is the president and CEO of Bacardi Canada, but it's also the 150th anniversary of Bacardi rum. Thank you for your great "spirit."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Eventually, I think if we put them all together, we'll have a members' statement.

The member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome my good friend and former mayor of the city of Toronto, Barbara Hall, of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Welcome, Barbara.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome the former mayor.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FOREST FIRE

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the heroic efforts of the many professionals and volunteers who were able to get Timmins

fire number nine under control after 13 terrible, anxious days for the people of this community.

For 13 days, the residents of Timmins were faced with the very real possibility of evacuation and the loss of their homes. This fire had become the largest forest fire in the Timmins area in more than 50 years. It was more than 70 kilometres long and covered nearly 40,000 hectares. The outpouring of effort and generosity from across the province and the country was outstanding.

Special thanks should go to the hard-working employees and volunteers of the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Timmins police, EMS and fire services, the Canadian Red Cross, professional fire rangers from across Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba and Alberta, water bombers from Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and BC, and the many other organizations and individuals who responded to the emergency with both time and donations.

As a result of the heroism and supreme efforts of the many, many people who answered the call for help, the homes, cottages, businesses, lifestyles and livelihoods of thousands of Ontarians were saved. As the PC critic for the Ministry of Natural Resources, I would like to extend a very sincere thank you to all those people and congratulate them on the successful outcome of their efforts.

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise today because we're coming to the end of this session. I want to acknowledge the incredible work of all of our incredible staff. We represent just the tip of the iceberg of an army of really hard-working EAs, LAs, constituency staff, ministry staff. I want to give a particular shout out to my staff: Gerard Di Trolio, Susan Rogers, who just had a birthday, Carly Jones and Bhutla Karpoche.

I also want to thank the ministry staff who worked on Bill 13, who worked with us, both Peter Tabuns and myself: Gabby Gallant and Howie Bender. These are the names you don't hear in this Legislature often, but these are the people who really make this place work. So I just want to say thank you for a lot of work this year. Thank you for long hours and weekends and time put in, often without recognition. This minute and a half is yours, and I dedicate it to you on behalf of all members here. Thank you for what you do, thank you for how you do it, thank you for when you do it. We do not forget in this Legislature that without great staff, we aren't great either. Here's to our staff.

BACARDI LTD.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Today I would like to speak about a great company located in Brampton, and a company that many of us are quite familiar with. The year 2012 marks the 150th anniversary of the founding of Bacardi by Don Facundo Bacardi Massó, in 1862. Bacardi has been operating continuously in Brampton since 1969, when it was opened by Alberto Bacardi, a member of the original

family. He came to Canada and liked Ontario so much that he decided to make it his home.

At Bacardi's Brampton plant, the blending and packaging they do add value to our local economy and provide jobs for about 100 people. In addition, \$16 million is spent annually by Bacardi Canada with other Ontario-based companies.

Bacardi Canada is also a good corporate citizen, supporting many civic projects, charitable organizations and local sports activities. In order to become more environmentally friendly, Bacardi switched from glass to PET plastic bottles for their popular summer drink, Bacardi Breezer. This initiative, as well as their carbon-neutral Break-Free Zones, reduced the company's emissions, equivalent to taking 200 cars off the road.

The work of the Bacardi facility in Brampton is a remarkable example of the success of an Ontario-based plant that contributes not only as a local economic driver but as a great corporate citizen while providing Ontario with great products.

I would like to congratulate Bacardi as they celebrate their 150th anniversary.

ACTON-GEORGETOWN WALK FOR ALS

Mr. Ted Arnott: On Saturday, I had the privilege of attending the Acton-Georgetown Walk for ALS. ALS, sometimes called Lou Gehrig's disease, is a rapidly progressive neuromuscular disease. Those suffering with ALS have their muscles slowly degenerate, eventually leaving them unable to move. Approximately 2,500 to 3,000 Canadians over the age of 18 currently live with ALS. It's an awful disease, for which there is currently no cure. Some 80% of those diagnosed die within two to five years.

But the compassion of our community gives cause for hope. The Acton-Georgetown walk has grown into the biggest ALS walk in Canada. Each year, hundreds of people show up to raise money to support those living with the disease and to fund ALS research. Last year's walk raised \$180,000. That accounts for almost 13% of the \$1.4 million raised province-wide. Over the past three years, the Acton-Georgetown walk has raised over \$600,000.

I want to congratulate everyone involved for the incredible success of this event. In particular, I want to recognize Dr. Jeff Sutherland and Scott Murray, two Georgetown residents who are suffering from ALS. They have done so much work to raise awareness of the disease, and it was amazing to see how many people came out on Saturday to support them and others afflicted with ALS and their families. I also want to thank the co-chairs of the walk, Mary Jo Knox and Rob Blackburn, and all the volunteers who made the event such a great success.

This month is ALS Awareness Month, and I would encourage all members to take the time to learn more about this disease and support efforts in their communities to raise awareness.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: With the warm weather now here, many people across my riding and across Ontario will open their door to find a salesperson waiting outside, offering substantial savings on electricity and natural gas bills. These salespeople will use any trick in the book to make a sale, including guaranteeing savings, promising greener energy or even pretending to be from their local utility—anything to get the customer to sign on the dotted lines.

These companies say that these agents are rogue agents, yet I've dealt with hundreds of cases, in dozens of communities hundreds of kilometres apart, and the stories are all the same across the board. These companies do not provide a good or a service. The natural gas and the hydro that they sell are the same natural gas and hydro that people have had before. They do not protect the consumer. A 2009 exposé by CBC found that since being introduced, a grand total of zero people saved money on their hydro bills.

While it is possible to save money on natural gas, my experience has been that customers end up paying four to five times more than they would pay their local, publicly owned utility.

If these companies are offering a valuable service, they could use traditional means to peddle their wares and not resort to doorsteps, where they cannot be monitored.

I am today calling on the Minister of Energy to do the right thing, to stand up for consumers and ban the door-to-door sale of costly and misleading energy contracts.

TIM HORTONS CAMP DAY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Tomorrow at 7 o'clock in the morning, I'll be pouring coffee, which isn't all that unusual—everybody pours coffee in the morning—but I'll be pouring this coffee at Tim Hortons's head office.

I'm rising today to remind you about a wonderful event that will be taking place in all our communities. Tomorrow is Tim Hortons Camp Day. That means that every penny from all the coffee sales gets donated to the Tim Horton Children's Foundation.

On camp day, the coffee proceeds will help send more than 14,000 underprivileged kids to a Tim Horton Children's Foundation camp. They get to participate in a wide range of first-class programs and activities, and they build their self-esteem and leadership skills.

As many of you know, I'm privileged to have Tim Hortons's headquarters in my riding of Oakville. On numerous occasions, I've seen restaurant owners working closely with local youth organizations and schools. They select children between the ages of nine and 12 to attend a 10-day summer or seven-day winter camp.

Since 1975, more than 150,000 children have attended a foundation camp at no cost to them or to their families.

1510

I'd like to encourage all the members here, everybody watching on TV and all my fellow Ontarians to help send

a kid to camp by purchasing a cup of coffee tomorrow from your local Tim Hortons.

ST MARYS CEMENT

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm proud to rise today to recognize outstanding achievements made by an industry in my community, St Marys Cement.

This year, St Marys is celebrating its 100th anniversary. The anniversary is particularly significant because last fall, the St Marys plant in Bowmanville proudly became the first plant in North America that successfully achieved the ISO 50001 standard. The 50001 is a certification which helps businesses understand and modify their energy consumption and use. To date, St Marys has reduced electricity consumption by 11 million kilowatts. That's enough power to power 1,100 homes for a year. Not only is this good news for the planet, but it's also good news for the bottom line. Because of this work, St Marys has realized over \$3 million in savings, let alone the savings to our environment.

I would like to recognize the plant manager, Fabio Garcia, as well as Jim Storey, Jason Schultz, Brian MacDonald, Louis Kaye, Martin Vroegh and Wilson Little. All of them are members of the energy management and energy conservation committee with St Marys.

On June 7, the first ISO 50001 ceremony in North America will be held at the St Marys plant to recognize this important milestone. I'm confident that members of this House will join me in extending congratulations to the entire team at St Marys.

On a personal note, many of you may know that Wilson Little is retiring sometime this year—a great leader in the industry. I thank him for his service.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise here today to speak on an ongoing international issue. Lake Urmia in northwestern Iran is one of the world's largest salt lakes, but it is rapidly shrinking.

Lake Urmia is an internationally registered and protected lake by the UNESCO biosphere reserve. In recent years, it has been suffering from great amounts of drought as a result of the construction of dams on rivers feeding the lake. Satellite observations of Lake Urmia's surface show an overall decline of about four metres in its depth between 1992 and 2011.

Lake Urmia holds eight billion cubic metric tonnes of salt. According to experts, if the lake completely dries up, a vast amount of salt will be released into the region, resulting in an ecological, agricultural and social catastrophe in the Azerbaijani province of Iran. It will force millions of people to abandon their homes around the lake, and the vast majority of flora and fauna will be lost completely.

The Save Lake Urmia campaign is an international campaign dedicated to preventing the extinction of Lake Urmia and to encourage the Iranian government to take action for its preservation.

I urge my colleagues to take some time to promote this campaign to their constituents to help further raise awareness to save such an environmentally important asset of this planet.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Randy Hillier: In 1978, Scott Finlay from Napanee suffered a critical brain injury skiing during the Canadian downhill championships. His father, Hugh, has been trying to set up a facility in Napanee to serve those with acquired brain injuries for over 20 years.

I first met with the LHIN back in 2010, along with ministry officials and people such as Hugh Finlay. The LHIN has a funding envelope of over \$3 million annually for acquired brain injuries, yet they couldn't tell me where that money goes because they don't know.

A year ago this week, the LHIN finally submitted their plan to recommend and construct an ABI facility in Napanee. Months later, the Ministry of Health said that they needed to resubmit a plan that matched the ministry's vision for such facilities, so they did. Earlier this year, the LHIN resubmitted their new plan for the Napanee facility, which fulfilled all the MOH requirements. Yet there haven't been any new developments.

Like the Carleton Place hospital in my riding, this government has demonstrated that promises and proposals for health infrastructure are nothing more than a political football that can be punted about at a whim in an attempt to score political gain. It is disappointing, because the people of my riding believe that political and electoral gain ought not to be the determining factors for health care funding.

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House I have today laid upon the table the 2011 Annual Energy Conservation Progress Report, Volume One, from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario entitled A Review of the First Three Years of the Green Energy Act.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Reports by committees? You don't heckle the Speaker.

Reports by—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And you're still doing it.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk received a report on intended

appointments dated June 5, 2012, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I would like to start off by asking you to welcome with me the following people that we have in the House today with us. We have Barbara Hall, the chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. She's joined by Nancy Austin, Michael Gotthel, David Wright and David Draper. The last three are with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. We also have Kathy Laird, who's with the Human Rights Legal Support Centre. I wonder if you could welcome those individuals for being here.

Applause.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize a significant milestone in human rights. June 15 marks the 50th anniversary of the Human Rights Code of Ontario. Ontario has been and is a trailblazer when it comes to human rights. Fifty years ago we, in this province, enacted the country's first Human Rights Code. The code provides us with a framework of human rights goals and standards to aspire to, and it was a declaration to all that injustices simply would not be tolerated.

The code ensures that all Ontarians have equal rights and opportunities, and prevents discrimination and harassment based on things such as race or ancestry, place of origin, colour, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, disability and age.

Ontario has a proud history of protecting and advancing human rights and is recognized around the world as a pioneer. But, Speaker, we did not achieve this status overnight. As a society, we have worked hard for the gains we've made, never settling for the status quo and constantly pushing for change where change was needed.

We have come a long way over the last 50 years, aided by the efforts of many brave women and men. Take the story, for example, of Daniel Hill, the head of Ontario's first Human Rights Commission. Just a few decades ago, Mr. Hill found out first-hand how it felt to face racism in search of a place to live. Daniel Hill, a black man, had done something that was almost unheard-of at the time: He had married a white woman. When Hill and his wife, Donna, tried to rent their first apartment right here in Toronto, Donna had to bring a white friend with her to meet with the apartment owners. It took weeks before the Hills could sign a formal lease with that landlord.

There are many other examples that I could mention, stories such as the one I just related that illustrate how far we've come in the last 50 years. I think we can all be

proud of the leadership role that we here in the Ontario government have played in furthering human rights in Canada and for the great work that has been done and continues to be done. But we must continue to be vigilant in order to protect these gains that we have made.

Four years ago, our government took a further leadership role by introducing a new and strengthened human rights system that consists of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, which looks at systemic as well as overall policy issues; the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, which deals with individual claims and cases of noncompliance; and a new, robust Human Rights Legal Support Centre, which assists those who have cases in front of the tribunal. These three institutions are now working for the people of Ontario.

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We modernized and strengthened the system by giving people direct access to the decision-makers and offering free legal advisory and support services for those who feel that they've experienced discrimination.

To ensure that we remain on track, our government included a commitment to conduct an independent review of the system's progress after three years. Last year, Andrew Pinto, a prominent human rights and employment lawyer, was appointed to lead this important work. Mr. Pinto is currently looking at the implementation and effectiveness of these changes that we made three years ago and is preparing a report which I look forward to reviewing later on this year.

All of us can be proud of the fact that Ontario is leading the way in advancing human rights here in Canada. We have taken steps to strengthen our human rights system to better ensure dignity and justice for all Ontarians and ensure that each and every person has the right to live freely and be treated with respect. We have worked hard to make certain Ontario is a welcoming, tolerant and accepting place where our citizens are free to pursue their hopes and dreams. We owe it to individuals like Daniel Hill and their successors.

As we recognize the 50th anniversary of the Ontario Human Rights Code, I take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to upholding human rights for every person in Ontario.

SENIORS' MONTH

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today to celebrate and recognize seniors in communities across Ontario as we celebrate Seniors' Month. The theme this year is "Celebrate. Participate." This month, we want to celebrate our seniors and encourage them to participate in their communities, and we want to encourage all Ontarians to take the time to attend Seniors' Month events.

This theme also helps build momentum for the upcoming Ontario 55+ Summer Games taking place this August in one of the most beautiful cities in our province, one that I'm rather partial to, Brampton. These games happen every two years and were most recently held in Oshawa. The games will bring out some of the best of Ontario's active seniors, whether it's through tennis,

swimming, card games or pickleball. I'm excited about hosting the games this summer and hope to see all of you there in Brampton this August 14 to 16.

Seniors' Month also happens to be a great time to acknowledge the people who have worked hard and sacrificed so much to improve the quality of our lives. Whether it's a parent, a grandparent, an aunt, an uncle, a neighbour or a friend, we all know a senior who has provided helpful wisdom, guidance and support. These are the people who built this province, and many of them still continue to help make this province a better place to live.

In Brampton, we are fortunate to have a very influential senior, one that I am also rather fond of, someone who still works hard every day to shape our province: Premier Bill Davis. Premier Davis still sits on boards, still provides advice and still mentors many young leaders in our province. He even called me the other day to offer advice on ways we can improve our health care system. I'm certainly grateful that Premier Davis still has the desire and the energy to provide us with constructive ideas about how to make this province an even better place.

There are countless other seniors in all of our ridings who share Premier Davis's passion. They have earned the right to age with dignity, independence, and the freedom to make their own decisions. They have earned the right to live in communities that are age-friendly. They have earned the right to continue to make our province a better place to live.

For our part, the McGuinty government is taking action to help ensure that Ontario seniors have the support that they need to live safe, active, healthy lives. We are the first government in Ontario's history to regulate retirement homes. The first resident protections, including a Residents' Bill of Rights, will come into force this July 1.

We just announced a partnership with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and police organizations to develop and deliver the province's first wandering prevention program. It's a program that will establish a standard, province-wide model to respond to emergencies when vulnerable seniors go missing and may be in danger. We're also helping caregivers through the proposed Family Caregiver Leave Act. And, because we know our seniors want to stay in their homes longer, our government's proposed healthy homes renovation tax credit, worth up to \$1,500 a year, would, if passed, help Ontario seniors live safely and more independently at home.

But Seniors' Month is, first and foremost, about celebrating our seniors and encouraging an active, healthy lifestyle. So I'm pleased, Mr. Speaker, to tell you that we support 273 elderly person centres, which offer recreational and wellness programming; we're helping raise awareness across Ontario about the universal benefits of age-friendly communities; and, each year, we celebrate the remarkable contributions of seniors through the Senior Achievement Awards.

I look forward to joining seniors across the province this month and over the summer to celebrate their con-

tinued contributions. I'm proud we have a month to recognize the important contributions of our seniors, but I feel compelled to say that we would be better served if we celebrated our seniors' accomplishments every day. After all, these are our parents, grandparents and the people who made Ontario what it is today. I ask you all to keep this in mind as you host or attend Seniors' Month events in your community.

ARTS AND CULTURE AWARDS

Hon. Michael Chan: On behalf of the McGuinty government, I'm pleased to take this opportunity to recognize 12 remarkable Ontario artists and arts organizations. The year 2012 marks the sixth year of the Premier's Awards for Excellence in the Arts, which celebrate artists and arts organizations for their innovation and creative talent. The passion they bring to their work inspires all Ontarians to participate in the extraordinary cultural life of our communities.

Our government knows how important artists and arts organizations are to Ontario. Our government understands the relationship between the arts and our quality of life. We know as well the very real value of the arts to the overall economy, because arts and culture build vibrant and creative communities, sharpen our competitive advantage, spur economic growth, and create a stronger Ontario.

The arts and culture sector is one of Ontario's fastest growing sectors. There are about 57,000 professional artists in Ontario. The creative sector contributes \$20 billion annually to Ontario's economy and employs over 200,000 people. The men and women working in the creative industries are vital to Ontario. They are key to a creative and innovative knowledge-based economy. Our government is proud to support and recognize artists for their important contribution to our communities and our economy.

This is why our government created these awards. It is a way for us to salute these extraordinary accomplishments. Today, I am proud to shine a light on our finalists, whose passion and creativity reflect the best in Ontario's cultural sector.

There were 163 nominations for the 2012 Premier's awards. The nomination process was open to all Ontarians, and the people of Ontario showed what a strong interest they take in our arts and cultural industries. An expert jury chosen by the Ontario Arts Council awards office evaluated candidates and selected 12 finalists and the awards' laureates.

Our finalists in the individual artist category are Lydia Adams, conductor; Shirley Cheechoo, visual artist, playwright and filmmaker; Lawrence Cherney, musician and founding artistic director of Soundstreams Canada; writer Dennis Lee; David McFadden, poet; and Richard Underhill, musician.

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Our finalists in the arts organizations category are the Images Festival, the Ottawa Chamber Music Society, Sudbury's Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario, Roseneath

Theatre Company, Toronto's Tarragon Theatre and the Hot Docs Documentary Film Festival.

Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, the laureates of this year's awards will be announced. We celebrate and applaud all of Ontario's great artists, poets, novelists, dancers, musicians, playwrights, painters, photographers and filmmakers, whose work empowers our province.

I invite all Ontarians to start to consider nominees for next year's awards. This is a great opportunity to give back and celebrate their contributions, achievements and unwavering commitment.

Ontario is home to one of the best cultural sectors in the world, now and into the future, and we, as Ontarians, are proud of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to stand today and recognize the 50th anniversary of the Ontario Human Rights Code on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak.

The Ontario Human Rights Code gives all citizens of the province equal rights and opportunities while protecting them from discrimination. The code ensures that everyone is universally free from discrimination and harassment wherever they work or live in the province of Ontario.

Ontarians pushed for legislation to protect human rights following World War II, and the province was one of the first to introduce socially accepting legislation such as the Racial Discrimination Act in 1944, the Fair Employment Practices Act in 1951 and the Fair Accommodation Practices Act in 1954. In 1962, under Premier John Robarts, these acts were brought together under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Protecting people from discrimination and harassment is one of the most important ways to make sure everyone can reach their full potential and contribute in their communities. Over the past 50 years, systemic barriers within our institutions have been broken down and new opportunities and challenges have arisen. Yet all the while, the code has remained, and Ontario has now been a leader in protecting and advancing human rights for more than 50 years. For half a century, Ontario's public policy has recognized the dignity and worth of every person and provided equal rights and opportunities for all.

Speaker, every person has the right to be free from discrimination and harassment. That fundamental right is the foundation of the Ontario Human Rights Code, and it is with pride that I, my party and my leader acknowledge its 50th anniversary. Congratulations.

SENIORS' MONTH

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to mark Seniors' Month in Ontario on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus.

During this month, we recognize the thousands of seniors in Ontario who have contributed to building our society and who continue to make a difference in the lives of families and communities.

In my own riding, I think of people like John and Jeanne Pynn from Sutton, the first couple to be presented with the Ontario Senior Achievement Award—each for individual achievements. I think of Susan Boyne-Bird, who has just become the neighbourhood network ambassador for East Gwillimbury; Audrey Whitcombe, master gardener and active community volunteer with everyone from youth to seniors; and Margaret Hambly, entrepreneur and business owner, who has worked on many volunteer activities, including the very successful Georgian Bay Steam Show.

Seniors such as those I've mentioned—and I only have time to mention a few—are the heart and soul of our communities. They volunteer to help those in need, they work to improve our local quality of life, and many still run businesses that create jobs and prosperity.

ARTS AND CULTURE AWARDS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's wonderful to stand up and congratulate the finalists and to recognize and celebrate the talent that we have here in Ontario. The Premier's Awards for Excellence in the Arts are an annual award and something that is very worthwhile in the arts community. You know, 50 years ago, we remember the rock and roll artists that came along and created a new music genre. That's what we remember, more than we remember the development of the economy of the 1950s or the 1960s, even though that economy was an amazing thing. It was booming, and yet the things that people associate with the 1950s are the music, the arts that were generated there.

Fifty years from now, we will also remember the arts that were developed in this time. The recognition and the celebration of those arts is a worthwhile cause because that will define us as a people and it will define our society. It will remind people what we were all about.

The Premier's awards are something that I'm very pleased about. Hopefully they will continue long into the future and recognize the great talent that we have, not only in this city but across Ontario.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm very proud to rise today to speak on the 50th anniversary of the Human Rights Code. Ontario was a trailblazer in being the first province to enact the Human Rights Code, acknowledging that human rights are our birthright. They are rights that we are entitled to simply by being born, and we recognize that we must protect all people to ensure that they enjoy freedom from being discriminated against, that they can be accepted, not simply tolerated.

In being trailblazers in recognizing these rights, I challenge Ontario and I challenge us to move forward

and to be greater trailblazers by creating a more accessible system, by improving on the great work we've already done and ensuring that our system of the Human Rights Code and our tribunal is more accessible, more independent and not dependent on simply one ministry but is something open to the entire Legislature.

We can be trailblazers, we have been trailblazers, and we must acknowledge that a free and democratic society requires protection of our human rights, which are our birthright.

SENIORS' MONTH

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the minister's statement on seniors. I'm a firm believer that seniors are the backbone of our society. They represent our past, present and future. But more than that, how we treat our seniors is an excellent indicator of who we are as a society. I believe and my NDP caucus believes that all seniors deserve to live with dignity and respect.

Recent reports would indicate that the loss of dignity suffered by seniors has become epidemic in this province. When asked to take action on the recent reports of senior abuse, this government's response was to implement quick-fix solutions. This, coupled with the fact that a majority of seniors today are living at or below the poverty line, is unacceptable.

Seniors have become the forgotten generation, and we must do all we can to address this distressing fact. We must set aside our personal and political leanings and agree to prioritize Ontario's seniors by repaying their lifetime of hard work with the dignity they deserve.

ARTS AND CULTURE AWARDS

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, it is my pleasure to talk about the Premier's Awards for Excellence in the Arts. I'm very impressed by the nominees for the 2012 awards and congratulate them for their nominations on behalf of the NDP caucus.

However, I will suggest that we do more to encourage nominations from the farthest corners of our province. Eight of the 12 recipients are from the Toronto area. I'm sure that each member here knows of outstanding achievements by artists and art organizations from many different art disciplines who have contributed to arts and culture in Ontario over a significant period of time and who qualify for these awards. It is telling that the majority of these chosen are from Toronto, and it's likely due to the fact that they gain exposure. In order to bring art to a more public level, you need to be in a large metropolis. But just think about how far these financial awards would go in other parts of Ontario. Just think of how exciting it would be for artists to have the resources to stay in their community that might be a major inspiration for them. I'm sure that the Ontario Arts Council does a stellar job of getting the nomination packages out to every community in our province, but I

encourage this minister to work on an expansion of these awards to ensure that artists who can't or don't want to move to the big city will have an increased opportunity to be recipients of this award.

I encourage every MPP in this Legislature to seek out qualified artists and art organizations in their own ridings and to be sure that they are nominated for the 2013 awards. The 2013 nomination deadline is December 3, 2012.

PETITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt;

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and Oak Ridges moraine;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries;

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt."

As I am in agreement, I've affixed my signature.

1540

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. John Vanthof: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, as an anti-bullying measure, Bill 13 is unnecessary because Ontarians already have Bill 157; and

"Whereas Bill 13 promotes an equity policy entailing radical revisions to school instruction on sex and gender that a majority of parents do not support; and

"Whereas legislation is not the way to implement equity education (this should rather be addressed by teacher training, after wider parental consultation, in a way which respects the views of people of faith);

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to vote against Bill 13."

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I have a petition signed by some members of the Canadian Auto Workers in my riding. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Canadian automobile industry is of vital importance to Ontario; and

"Whereas each day auto workers produce millions of dollars worth of product; and

"Whereas the sector accounts for thousands of jobs in Ontario; and

"Whereas the auto workers of the CAW have asked the federal government and the provincial government to develop a national auto strategy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request that the province of Ontario call on the federal government to develop a national auto strategy to support the Canadian auto sector and to develop an overall strategy for keeping good jobs in Ontario and Canada."

I agree with this, will sign it and send it down with Andrew.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

"Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

"Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and the organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

"Whereas Bill 23 passed first reading in the Ontario Legislature on December 6, 2011;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly vote in support of Sylvia Jones's Bill 23—the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act."

Obviously I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Tameem to take to the table.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It pays to get up early. I have this petition that was gathered by Anita Gibson, a constituent in my riding, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Education in their ... accommodation review guideline mandates that the AR process 'ensures that where a decision is taken by a school board

regarding the future of a school, that decision is made with the full involvement of an informed local community and it is based on a broad range of criteria regarding the quality of the learning experience for students' yet this was not the case for the decision to close Long Lake Public School;

"Whereas the Ministry of Education in their ... AR guideline mandates 'In recognition of the important role schools play in strengthening rural and urban communities and the importance of healthy communities for student success, it is also expected that decisions consider the value of the school to the community, taking into account other government initiatives aimed at strengthening communities,' yet in the case of the decision to close Long Lake Public School no such consideration was made;

"Whereas the community participation in the mandated process was extremely limited because none or limited financial, programming, funding, timing, and transportation information was made available by the board to the stakeholders, and this dearth of data had the effect of limiting the participation of both the parents/guardians of students at the affected school, and the wider community, with the result being neither were represented in the final outcome; and

"Whereas the current Education Act of Ontario, very undemocratically, provides school boards with the absolute power to close any school they choose with no avenue of appeal available to anyone, not even members of their own communities;

"Whereas many other communities across Ontario are now encountering very similar behaviours by their school boards;

"Whereas this represents a major paradigm shift in the cultural and historical context of the provision of education in Ontario, implemented without any political debate or public discussion about the merits and risks inherent in adopting such a model;

"Therefore we ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" to put

"(1) An immediate moratorium on all disputed school closures resulting from the" AR "process and continuing until at least June 30, 2015; and

"(2) The immediate striking of a truly independent third party body with the authority to review and reverse all disputed school closures found to be detrimental to the community or in conflict with other provincial programs or regulations; and

"(3) Revision of the Education Act to require school boards to work with their municipalities and communities to ensure school closures comply with the principles and practices of sound community and educational planning."

I'm sorry it was a bit long, but it was very important for my constituents to be heard. I fully support it and will give it to page Sam to bring to the Clerk.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page the.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with 900 signatures to do with invasive species. This is an Asian carp petition to the province of Ontario and the federal government of Canada. It reads:

"Great Lakes residents, both US and Canadian, alarmed that Asian carp are considered the most imminent threat to the Great Lakes, are calling for an effective long-term solution. Currently, bighead and silver carp are the dominant fish species in the Mississippi and the Illinois Rivers. They are voracious eaters capable of eating up to 20% of their body weight each day and growing up to 110 pounds. They consume plankton, algae and other microscopic organisms, stripping the food web of key food for native fish. There are no fish in North America large enough to eat adult Asian carp, and they produce many offspring that grow quickly, rapidly becoming too large for native predators.

"The Great Lakes Commission and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative recently presented a report to their members, the Great Lakes states, provinces and mayors and the region's stakeholders and decision-makers. Their report outlines viable solutions to the threat from Asian carp and other invasive species moving through Chicago-area waterways while also maintaining and enhancing the system's benefits. The report shows that separation is achievable from an engineering perspective and will advance a long-term solution that safeguards the Great Lakes and Mississippi river basins from aquatic invasive species.

"We, the undersigned Canadians, do hereby petition our provincial and federal governments to immediately begin to work with the Great Lakes Commission and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative to provide assistance to ensure that the process begins as soon as possible to separate the Chicago waterways with

permanent barriers to prevent Asian carp from getting into the Great Lakes."

I do support this initiative.

1550

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have another 1,000 signatures here for a petition regarding auto insurance. It reads as follows:

"Auto insurance reform needed ...

"Whereas auto insurance rates are too high in the province of Ontario and continue to increase;

"Whereas families across the greater Toronto area (GTA) are facing unfair insurance premiums that have more to do with where they live than their accident history or driving ability; and

"Whereas insurance premiums across the GTA differ by as much as 150% for drivers with the same driving record;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly undertake auto insurance reforms that protect consumers, ensuring that premiums are based on a fair assessment of a driver's known ability and history, rather than unfairly targeting drivers on the basis of where they live."

I strongly agree with this petition, affix my signature and will present it to young page Tameem.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer's disease is progressive, worsens over time, and will eventually lead to death;

"Whereas there are an estimated 181,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer's and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease creates social, emotional and economic burdens on the family and friends of those suffering with the disease;

"Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish an Alzheimer's advisory council to advise the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on matters pertaining to strategy respecting research, treatment and the prevention of Alzheimer's and other related dementia."

I agree with this petition and sign my name.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas industrial wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values; and

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments; and

"That the Minister of the Environment conduct a thorough scientific study on the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines."

I agree with this petition and will sign it.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of northwestern Ontario, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the province's economy from other provinces and the United States, unlike other regions in the province whose target demographic is people who already reside in Ontario;

"Whereas northwestern Ontario's tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales tax (HST), the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

"Whereas studies have shown that tourism in the northwest nets significantly more money per stay than other regions of the province, in part due to visitors frequenting historical sites, parks and other roadside attractions that they learn about through travel information centres;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To keep the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River open permanently to ensure that northwestern Ontario maximizes the benefit of our tourist economy."

I proudly support this and will give this to page Sam to deliver.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to present this petition on paved shoulders on provincial highways. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I join with my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka in reading it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary provincial highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas" a private member's bill proposes "a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 9, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincially owned highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

Speaker, as one who has biked through my life, I understand the importance of—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time for petitions has ended.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY HOMES RENOVATION TAX CREDIT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU LOGEMENT AXÉ SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 9, 2012, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit / *Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts en vue de mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour l'aménagement du logement axé sur le bien-être.*

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker. This is a long recess. I believe the last time I debated this bill was May 9. I recall—maybe I moved adjournment of the House at that time and never came back. So I've almost forgotten what I was talking about in the initial 24 minutes.

The first thing I'd like to advise the Chair of is that my colleague from Leeds-Grenville will be sharing my time with me.

As I was saying when I was rudely interrupted by the bells on May 9, we're discussing seniors and the need for the healthy homes tax credit, Bill 2. Because it is so long ago, I actually will take a look at Hansard and give a brief synopsis of where I was positioning myself and our party.

Seniors—the definition being 65-plus—qualify for this tax credit proposed by the bill. That's about 13% of Ontario's population in total, or about 1.8 million people broadly speaking. But there are some very mitigating circumstances, one of which is that the median senior income in Ontario—meaning that most seniors living in

Ontario are in this category—is \$25,000 per individual and \$45,000 per couple. You can see where I'm going with this. That translates into approximately \$2,000 to \$3,700 of income—gross income—per month, depending upon whether you're a single senior or part of a senior couple. In order to qualify for the maximum tax credit of \$1,500, which is 15% of the maximum expenditure of \$10,000, a senior actually has to have \$10,000 to spend. That is the problem. That really is the problem, as one of my colleagues has said. So they have to have that. When the senior spends the \$10,000, he or she actually winds up out of pocket to the tune of \$8,500.

So the point I was making at that time and the point I want to reiterate to set the tone for the rest of the debate today is that that takes that 1.8 million people and whittles it down to a very, very, small piece of the overall pie in terms of the number of people who actually could participate. That's the point of our party in saying that we find it hard to support a bill like this. As much as we are oriented towards helping seniors—and I think the record on that speaks for itself—this is an inappropriate approach.

What you've got is this global universe of 1.8 million; you cut through the first layer and you find the people who can actually afford it. Now, you have to think about that: If you were 70 years old, for example, in 2008-09, you would have been a person who may very well, if you look at that generation, have been retired—retired in the context of yesteryear, not retired as we see it in the future, where I think we're all going to have to work until we drop, but a 70-year-old, in 2008-09, living on retirement income, which is presumably made up of pensions and dividends that were based on an economy that was buoyant until that time and were decimated. So what happened is—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Will you be quiet, please, sir. Thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

You wind up with dividend income or interest income and you then had to dip into the principal. You dipped into the principal, and you were left in the situation they find themselves in now, which is a reduced principal and a reduced income on a go-forward basis, and therefore a reduced ability to get involved in some program like this. Not only that, but not any renovations qualify; only renovations that the McGuinty government has decided qualify.

So you're talking about healthy homes. What's a healthy home? A healthy home is a home that has to be equipped for somebody who is verifiably incapable of, for example, mounting the stairs, climbing into a bathtub, that kind of thing. So there's a handicap involved, and that person can't be on something like ODSP, or Ontario disability.

So you cut it down, you cut it down and you cut it down; how many people do you suppose actually qualify to receive this? So our party's position was, "Okay, if you wanted to help seniors, then why don't we talk about helping seniors on a more broad-based basis than this?"

Nobody seems to be able to come up with a solution to how to address that aspect.

I said, and I'll put Hansard down in a moment, "Who are you guys kidding? Where's the take-up on this?" That is the notional direction in which I was heading when we adjourned on May 9.

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Something has come up between then and now that really mitigates against this bill, and that is the issue of how we afford it. First of all, we were given information by the government of the day on how they would fund this. We were given figures of \$60 million for the period elapsed to date, and \$135 million—approximate—in ensuing years, all of this to be funded from existing programs so that it wouldn't be new spending. I take that with a bit of a grain of salt, but the fact of the matter is, that's what we were given.

In the intervening period of time, we've seen a couple of things transpire. We've seen a negotiation with the socialist party on the basis of what their needs were, to add a couple of amendments which changed the dynamics of the budget with which we were presented. More recently, without any knowledge on the part of anybody I know on this side of the House, in either that party or our own, we hear of the Premier talking about a change in the aspect governing privatization. I'm talking about the budget. So he's going to climb down and take the Liberal Party down on what appears in something called schedule 28 of Bill 55, now before committee. Schedule 28 deals with the powers of the cabinet that would allow for privatization of certain aspects of government and the ability to contract out by tender. We thought that was a pretty good idea.

If you're not going to do that, then what you do—and this does relate to this bill—is you change the dynamics of the budget again so that we no longer can look at the revenue figure that was supplied to us when the budget was tabled on March 27 and take that as gospel, or even as a legitimate estimate, and we cannot look at the cost figure that was tabled against it and look at that as a legitimate estimate, because there are costs against it that have come up that we also can't estimate, which are the costs of not privatizing some of the things that the government was anticipating in the formulation of the budget.

Everything that we have to debate here—and we're debating Bill 2, which carries costs with it—is in question. I don't know if it's \$60 million to date or \$135 million in ensuing years, and I don't know what programs they're going to shift to get that money to fund this program. I don't know any of that. I don't even know—and nobody knows, except maybe, secretly, the government—what the real revenue figure is for the budget for the year that we're now in or what the real expenditure figure is. Most significantly, we have no idea what the deficit is going to be, and it would be nice to know, given the fact that we are all here, all 107—I guess 106 right now—having to vote on a budget that already is covering a year that began on April 1. That's a problem,

and it's a problem in debating any bill that carries a cost, and this bill carries a cost.

Getting back to the crux of the bill, I don't see how the bill actually helps seniors in any kind of broad-based way. I really don't see how the members on the other side, on the Liberal side, the government side of the House, could convince themselves otherwise. Not only does this bill not help seniors; it has no meaningful impact whatsoever on the economy, notwithstanding the protestations of the government of the day. It doesn't really encourage any kind of broad-based renovation projects and it doesn't really create jobs on any kind of a broad basis. The two biggest single stumbling blocks for my party in supporting the budget in the first place were: You don't have a jobs plan and you don't seem to be able to control spending. What am I talking about right now? I'm talking about a bill that underscores the fact that the jobs they're talking about inherent in this bill are some numbers somewhere, somehow—we don't know what they are—and they're spending some money against the budget that we don't know the value of. That is a situation that I called absurd and, indeed, it was absurd.

I also recall that, about the time that we stopped debating this on May 9, I had this unique ability to speak and think at the same time on two completely different subjects. I was thinking how much I was boring myself talking about this bill. But I digress, because the fact of the matter is that we're spending serious here. We have a jobs crisis in the province of Ontario. It's not something that we fabricated and it's not something that our friends on the government side even deny. We have a jobs crisis in the province of Ontario, and it is not overstatement to say that we are in dire financial circumstances in the province of Ontario. All government efforts have to focus on creating opportunities for businesses that will result in new jobs for Ontarians. Instead, the Liberal government spends its time doing what? Political promotion. What we're talking about here is promoting half measures—and I think I'm being generous when I call them half measures—like Bill 2. This doesn't only give me pause; it concerns me, because the fact of the matter is, Speaker, as is well known to you and well known to everybody here who reads statistics—and we all have to—we are at a point in Ontario where we're pushing on 600,000 unemployed. We hear more bad news every week; indeed, it seems like every day. We heard about General Motors in Oshawa, a couple of days ago, adding 2,000 more next year. These are great jobs that are leaving the province.

Under those circumstances, I think we have to be looking at the overall situation. We have to look at things on a grander scale. We're facing the highest level of unemployment in recent history—7.8% currently; 64 months, I believe it's 65 now, where we have been at the tail end of Canada, all provinces and territories, in terms of percentage unemployed—no hope of this number dipping below 7% until 2015. It means a number of things. It means that Ontarians are in the depths of an income crisis. I know, I know; the Liberal government doesn't even begin to understand that concept. They keep

raking in money from taxpayers, individuals, businesses, and what do they do? They spend it.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That's right. The McGuinty government has raised taxes on Ontarians to such a degree that even in the depths of recession, government revenues have actually increased. I'll say that again, because I think the people who are watching outside of this place have to understand something. As much as we have a financial problem in Ontario, we have to understand what created that financial problem. It wasn't a lack of revenue, because even in the worst year we had, which was 2008-09, when, admittedly, the world was in a crisis from which we haven't fully emerged—certainly, the depths of it were in that particular year—even in that year, Speaker, this province took in more money than it did the prior year, and the year after that it took in more money again. We have always increased revenue in every single year of Ontario's existence.

In 2011-12, we took in a record of \$108.3 billion, and despite that, this government has still managed to put Ontario into record debt and on the path towards what? A deficit that has been estimated as—2017-18—\$30 billion.

Mr. Steve Clark: Shame.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That's correct; \$30 billion, and it is a shame.

We don't have a revenue problem in Ontario. We have a spending problem in Ontario, and we might as well give it a name, so I'm going to name it the McGuinty factor.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Well, that's what it is. You put bills in front of this Legislature like this and you say, "Look what I'm going to do," because you made a political promise during an election that sounded quite nice and serves very, very few on a very small basis.

I know that the NDP will support this bill in the end, but I also know that in committee when this was considered—and I sit on that committee—they shared the same concerns that we did. It wasn't broad-based enough. They can speak for themselves, but the point is that I think we see through what this bill is about and why it was tabled.

We were talking about the McGuinty factor. Ontarians, unlike the government, are in the depths of an income crisis. They've lost their jobs; they've had their wages cut; they've given up shifts. Many of these Ontarians are taking care of aging parents, grandparents. Creating conditions in which businesses can thrive and expand would result in good jobs for Ontarians so that they actually could take care of their families.

If you want to really do what this bill purports to do, which is to provide for people who are less capable of creating what they need in their homes to allow them to stay in their homes, the best way you can do it is to create the conditions for employment in Ontario so that the economy and the people who are generating that economic activity for both the province and for themselves can take care of their responsibilities, which include their

families, family commitments. Innovation, accountability, fiscal responsibility on the part of the government are crucial to achieving that objective. At a time like this, when we are literally standing on the brink of an economic disaster—and I'm not overstating the case when I say that—in the province of Ontario, every move counts and at all times the government must make the decisions that will deliver the biggest bang for the taxpayers' buck.

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I'm going to defer to my colleague from Leeds–Grenville in a moment, but I want to end on that note by saying that this bill, while it does do something—which I'll describe as a pittance for a very small section of the seniors' community—is not broad-based enough to say that it does something for a segment of the population that is always on the short end of the stick, notwithstanding the fact that it has contributed arguably the most to what our province is. They lived through bad times; they lived through good times. Now they're in bad times again, and they're paying a dearer price than the rest of us. Some of us have taken a big hit in our salaries; some of us haven't got any salaries. The people who are at the part of the age spectrum that this bill might have served had it been more broad-based are people who are not in a position to go out and earn salaries again, much less get increases. They've suffered from decreases as a result of the economy that we have, and that we did have on a worldwide basis, and it was mitigated in a negative way by the actions or inactions of the McGuinty government, and this basically pours salt on a wound.

With that, Speaker, thank you very much for the time, and I defer to my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide some comments on Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act. I first want to give credit to the member for Thornhill. Earlier in his remarks, when he spoke prior to today on this bill, he mentioned a private member's bill that he had brought forward twice that would essentially allow seniors to stay in their homes and provide a tax deferral on their property. I think it set a record for the only co-sponsored bill that was never supported by all three parties. He tabled it the first time and I think it was soundly defeated, but he listened to all the comments that were made in the Legislature, repackaged the bill, went to a New Democrat and a Liberal, brought it back forward, and then the Liberal government, without notice, came and defeated it. But surprisingly, lo and behold, this concept that the member for Thornhill brought forward to allow seniors to defer payment of their municipal property tax surfaced during the election as a campaign promise of Dalton McGuinty and the government.

So I agree with Mr. Shurman, the member from Thornhill, that if the government was serious about bringing a much more broad-based support mechanism for seniors, I suggest that that original bill that he tabled—not once, but twice—that had support from the three parties, should have been at least for consideration.

Again, I hope that during the questions and comments and the other rotations as we debate this bill, the government will come forward and talk about that concept, because if it was good enough for them—as we say when you are going to copy someone's suggestion, that's a great form of flattery. However, I'd love to see the government put something on this floor, because unlike this bill, Mr. Shurman's bill had no cost, certainly not the cost that we're seeing with this bill, and even more so when we look at the amendment that was tabled.

I look at my own constituency office and I don't have a flood of emails or phone calls on this item.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Did you have one?

Mr. Steve Clark: I had a complaint, but I'll get to that in a moment. I brought it up during second reading, so hold that thought.

I don't think it's because seniors don't have very worthwhile projects in their homes in terms of renovation. It's that the reason they can't do those renovations is because they can't afford to, based on the fact that, as the member for Thornhill mentioned, you have to spend \$10,000, or up to \$10,000, and who has that money lying around? The reason they don't have the money lying around? I think it's fairly simple: It's the policies of this government, things like the HST, that have caused great problems with our senior population. Their energy policy, that has caused many seniors to fear that they'd have to leave their homes—those are the kinds of comments that I get at my constituency office. People are afraid, with the cost, to keep the lights on, as opposed to having \$10,000 lying around to spend on some of those types of improvements. Forget about putting a chairlift or an accessible washroom in; seniors want assistance to keep the lights on.

In terms of the HST, I wanted to look back at Hansard, and I'm glad my colleague the member for Durham is here in the chamber beside me, because he always manages to get to the heart of the reason why this bill is an abysmal failure. As the member for Durham noted in the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, if a senior in the province did have the luxury of having \$10,000 to spend on a project that qualifies for this rebate—and there are a number of very worthwhile improvements that don't qualify—even if they did qualify, they would only get \$1,500 back. To some, that may sound like a great deal; to others, not. But the member for Durham noted that, thanks to this government's hated HST, they're actually paying \$1,400 in the McGuinty sales tax on that \$10,000 of work. So at the end of the day, they've got about 100 bucks.

I think that really cut to the heart of the problem, and I want to thank the member for Durham for bringing that point up in the standing committee, because I think it's a good one.

In terms of this bill—you read the bill, and I've read the bill and looked at the amendments, and I will get to the amendments in a moment—it makes me remember another bill that we're debating. We're having hearings this week on Bill 19. The minister at that time stood and

she trumpeted that the legislation in Bill 19 would be a great protection to tenants from soaring rent increases, when she knew when she said that that it really does nothing of the sort. It may save tenants a few extra pennies, but when we look at the pennies that they would save because of that bill, I suggest that the first time that person received their energy bill, those pennies would be gone.

The government knows, in terms of Bill 2, that there are very few seniors in the province, the 1.8 million folks who are over 65, who are even in a financial position to spend \$10,000, not when you consider, as the member for Thornhill mentioned earlier this afternoon, that for the average senior in this province, the median income is about \$25,000 per individual and approximately \$45,000 per couple. Again, in addition to the income issue, there are a number of repairs that seniors would want to do that just would not be deemed eligible by the government.

During second reading, back on February 21, I talked about one of my constituents, Ron Stewart, who runs a small business called Stewart Property Maintenance, a business that, because of this government's policy with the HST—it has been devastating to his home service business. He falls above the \$30,000 threshold. He provides very important services to seniors in our community. He finds that the HST is making it difficult for seniors to afford his services and also for him to find people to work in his riding. He has to charge an additional 13% on grass cutting, snow removal, house-keeping—those are vital services that I think this government has overlooked when you have the opportunity for someone to stay in their home. I know that Ron was very concerned, that he just didn't see that there was a large uptake for this particular bill from his clients, and I have to tend to agree with him.

There's another issue that I want to bring to the table, and it's a story of note on the HST in the Vancouver Sun. It makes a couple of points that I believe are very relevant to the debate today.

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First, it pointed to the annual BMO Home Renovation Report, which noted that across Canada, only 51% of homeowners indicated that they are planning a home renovation project this year, and to members in this House, that is 11 percentage points below last year's total. What that tells me is that when you poll the full spectrum of homeowners and find that barely half are planning to do any work on their home, surely there's a very tiny, very slim percentage of seniors who (a) have the financial wherewithal to undertake a project, and (b) would be considering the kind of project that would qualify under Bill 2.

But what perhaps is most interesting from that article, Speaker, are the comments from Peter Simpson, who is the president and CEO of the Greater Vancouver Home Builders' Association. As we all know, the HST era in British Columbia is rather short-lived. It's going to, as I'm sure the members opposite know, disappear next year. I would have loved to be able to have the mech-

anism here in this province that they had in BC, to be able to mobilize constituents, to be able to have that direct democracy that they've had since 1991. I think it would have been a tremendous thing to see how that evolved in British Columbia.

But back to Mr. Simpson. Mr. Simpson had this to say about why so many BC residents in the survey indicated that they aren't planning renovations this year: "It's possible the upcoming change from the harmonized sales tax back to the provincial sales tax and goods and services tax might be causing people to think about putting off renovations until next year."

So there you have it. If the government wants an answer on why Ontario seniors are forgoing the kind of renovations necessary to keep them in their homes, maybe, just maybe, they should look in the mirror. I think that's an extremely important point. So many of my constituents continue to express the concern, the same concern that the member for Durham brought up at the hearings for this bill.

The other issue that came up when I was reading the bill, when it came out of committee, is (3.1), information concerning the tax credit, and I think it was an amendment—was it a socialist amendment?

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, the member for Thornhill.

And (3.1) says:

"An individual who wishes to claim the healthy homes renovation tax credit may contact the Ministry of Finance to obtain information concerning the tax credit, including the following:

"1. A list of appropriate organizations that may be able to provide any of the following:

"i. General advice about qualifying for the tax credit.

"ii. Review of quotes from contractors to ensure that the quotes are reasonable.

"iii. A list of experienced contractors who have successfully worked on projects that have qualified for the tax credit or any similar tax credits."

Then, finally, the second section:

"2. Any other information that may assist the individual in determining whether he or she may qualify for the tax credit."

So I'm not particularly sure, and perhaps the members opposite in the government could address, if this bill moves forward—and I suspect that it will pass with the government and the third party's support—how that is going to work. I'm still unsure how this is going to operate, whether it's going to be done by a call centre. I can't understand the costs, and I don't know how that's going to impact the government's allocation for this bill.

The member for Thornhill made some exceptional points with some of the schedules that the government now wants to walk away from in the budget and how they're going to pay for that. I think it's very important, as we move forward with the debate on Bill 2, that someone on that side of the House, or maybe someone who proposed it, can explain how the mechanics of this

are going to work. When the federal tax credit legislation was in effect, I don't believe my federal counterpart got those types of calls on who would qualify.

It's going to be interesting to see how this information—it appears in the preamble, I believe. It mentions that the ministry—yes, here it is, at the bottom of the explanatory note:

“An individual who wishes to claim the tax credit may contact the Minister of Finance for information about the tax credit, including the information specified”—and it lists all the subsections.

At the bottom, it says, “The Minister of Finance shall ensure that the appropriate annual financial reports compare the anticipated cost of the credit for a year against the actual cost of the credit for the year.”

Mr. Peter Shurman: Because they don't know.

Mr. Steve Clark: It would be—yes, absolutely. They wouldn't know.

I think it's important that someone take time to explain that to members of this House, because I think it's very important as we move forward to the debate.

The other issue that I spoke about earlier, and that I believe needs discussion, was the fact that there are some non-eligible renovations, things like new windows, replacing insulation, new heating or air conditioning. Those are the type of things that I think are pretty crucial to people staying in their homes, especially given the huge increase because of this government's failed energy policy that's causing concern in our senior population about how they're going to stay in their home. How are they going to have a healthy home? How are they going to be able to stay in their homes?

By not including things like windows and insulation, heating and air conditioning, it's quite ironic to me that when it comes to renovations that would cut down that expense, to have a more efficient system in your house to heat, to have those critical items like new windows or better insulation, things that would ultimately reduce your energy consumption—we had a policy during the election that seniors loved, which was this whole smart meter tax machine scheme that the government had, to make it optional. I had so many seniors whom I spoke to, both prior to and during that writ period, who were really concerned. I had one that I read into Hansard. It was a letter to the editor, where he talked about having to be a senior vampire, where he had to talk about doing all his business at night and sleeping during the day because he was home and he couldn't adhere to the McGuinty way with the smart meter tax machine.

To add insult to injury, now you've got some very good renovations on insulation and windows that wouldn't even qualify. Not everyone can have a chairlift. Not everyone can do the renovations that are included in this bill, and I think the government has really missed the mark.

We had Mr. Shurman's bill, which was tried not once but twice, that would have provided that broad base. We had a vote right here in the Legislature—Mr. Mantha, Bill 4, the private member's bill—where all of us on this

side of the House made a decision for broad-based relief that would help all seniors. Mr. Shurman's, with some qualifications, would help low-income seniors. This bill would only help those who have \$10,000, give them only \$1,500 back, and with the extra HST cost—

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's a wash.

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes, it would make no difference.

However, those same seniors would continue to show up at our constituency offices, would continue to express the same concerns, concerns that we dealt with in the first week in the Legislature on Bill 4. I had so many people come up to me after that fateful day, a day that I couldn't believe. We had the Premier here on private members' business. It was the first time that I had ever known about the fact that the government would be here in their place voting against something that clearly was the will of the people. You talk about an issue that people were so concerned about; that was one issue.

Over and over and over again, the failed policies of this government on green energy, the fact that they're not listening to local government—and as the critic for municipal affairs and housing, I certainly hear loud and clear from my municipal colleagues that they're fed up with this government.

The other issue that has hit my inbox this week—hundreds of emails in the last 48 hours—is on the community start-up benefit that the government has foisted upon municipalities to develop a housing strategy. My office is right beside an ODSP office. We have a great relationship, Speaker, with the ODSP office because of our close proximity. We've dealt with community start-up issues numerous times.

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For many of those seniors on ODSP, that community start-up benefit provides them a great leg up. Many times they'll use it to upgrade their housing accommodation. Sometimes they'll use it to help with a renovation, a minor renovation, maybe a lift in their shower. So to take that money and take a portion and throw it into municipalities for housing plans—I can understand why, in the last 48 hours, I've had hundreds of emails. I spoke to our critic for community and social services earlier today, and it's amazing how people have mobilized on that issue and how mad they are that the government would just unilaterally make that change.

So there is a lot that this government could have done on a broad base for seniors—

Hon. James J. Bradley: I got a call from Senator Runciman.

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, you go ahead and call him, and he'll wish you a happy anniversary, the minister from St. Catharines.

I know deep in your heart, because I think we know how your program—you would love to support a broad-based support like Bill 4, like Mr. Shurman's bill, but you're frozen in your place on supporting, I think, a bad piece of legislation that doesn't help seniors. It doesn't help seniors on a broad basis. There are so many holes in this piece of legislation, just in the amendments alone,

that I think will cause more confusion in constituency offices, not assistance.

I think we all agree that trying to help our constituents and assist them in any way we can is paramount to becoming a good member of provincial Parliament. This bill is not a good bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to make some comments on the views of the members from Thornhill and Leeds–Grenville regarding this bill.

One of the things that the member from Thornhill said: It does do something, and for that, we will support it. The problem is, it could have done so much more.

One of the problems that we see with this bill is that it tries to do—

Hon. James J. Bradley: What does Uncle Ernie say?

Mr. John Vanthof: We don't talk much about this bill—it tries to do several things and ends up doing none of them well. If the real purpose of this bill was to keep seniors in their homes, like seniors in Iroquois Falls or Kirkland Lake, you would broaden it, because not all seniors need the walk-in bathtub. A lot of them do need basic things for their home that would keep them in their home years longer.

The other focus of the bill is to create jobs, supposedly. But again, it's not a very efficient method of creating jobs. If you wanted to create more jobs, you would, as the member from Leeds–Grenville said, remove the HST burden, as we passed here on this side of the House.

But I would like to focus, really—keeping seniors in their homes should be the main focus, because it helps society. It obviously helps seniors, but it helps society as a whole. And with the number of \$25,000 in income for your average senior, this bill is not what's going to keep seniors in their homes. We could have, we should have—hopefully we will in the future—broadened it out to make true measures, not just ones that look good in the press, but real, thought-out measures. Some of them would be new windows or new insulation. You know, some of these houses were built when Mr. Bradley came to the Legislature. They could use some work.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I listened intently to the dynamic duo this afternoon from Thornhill and Leeds–Grenville talking about our healthy homes renovation tax credit.

Madam Speaker, I just want to set the context for you. Last Saturday, I had the opportunity to be at Home Depot in Peterborough. For those that might be familiar, it's at the corner of Lansdowne and Park, and I couldn't get a parking spot at Home Depot last Saturday. I went in there, and there were throngs of people. There were seniors buying lumber, there were seniors buying electrical equipment, and there were seniors buying plumbing equipment. They were flocking to the seminars at Home Depot—you can sign up all the time to do your renovations. And I spoke to those people, because I know many of them very, very well. They said, "Jeff, when are you

going to get this bill through Parliament at Queen's Park so we can take advantage of that home renovation tax credit?"

I said, "Joe, listen. I will get back on Monday. I will work with the opposition. We will get this bill through so you can get all your renovation work done and take advantage of that tax credit."

But it's interesting that one of the big areas a lot of seniors are looking at is their bathroom facilities, in order to make them more accessible. Often, if you have back trouble or hip trouble or knee trouble, you have to make that bathtub accessible. This tax credit will allow people to spend those dollars to make that bathtub accessible when they have mobility problems, so they can stay in their home longer.

I say to my friends from Thornhill and Leeds–Grenville, come to Peterborough. I'll sign you up for the seminar at Home Depot at the corner of Park and Lansdowne, and they can do the renovations in their homes and take advantage of the home renovation tax credit. Let's help our seniors in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to get up and comment on the comments on Bill 2 and maybe call the bluff on the member from Peterborough's talk of all the wealthy seniors that are in the province. What about the poor ones who couldn't get to Home Depot, couldn't even qualify to have the \$10,000 to apply for the home renovation tax credit? Come on. I'm glad that the Home Depot was busy, but you're ignoring the whole bigger picture we have in the province of Ontario, which is that seniors can't afford to stay in their own homes. I can tell you repeated stories upon repeated stories of seniors having to sell their homes because they can't afford to stay in their homes—

Mr. Todd Smith: Electricity.

Ms. Laurie Scott: —because of skyrocketing hydro rates. Right on, member from Prince Edward–Hastings. They can't. They come to you crying, and what can you do?

We tried to change the government. We were very close. We even passed a bill in this Legislature removing the HST from home heating. We won that vote, but no, the present Liberal government wouldn't bring that in. They brought in this very targeted seniors program for home renovation that only a very small group of seniors will qualify for—you have to have \$10,000 to qualify for \$1,500 back—and the Liberal government thinks they're giving seniors the best thing since sliced bread. Bull. It's not happening. There are more seniors living in poverty in the province of Ontario under your Liberal reign than ever before.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Oh, no.

Ms. Laurie Scott: For sure. If the member from Peterborough wants to come to Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, I can give lots of examples of seniors who need real assistance, seniors who need real home care. Yes, they need some modifications in their homes to be

able to stay in them, but they can't afford \$10,000 to even initiate this home tax credit. So I call the member from Peterborough's bluff. This is not helping the majority of seniors in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Obviously, we want to take care of seniors. Obviously, we want to do whatever we can to assist seniors to stay in their homes. So the idea of a tax credit has some benefit. But there's a deeper question here. It's a question of affordability. Seniors are faced with fixed incomes. The idea is that if they have a limited pool to draw from, one issue is mobility, sure, but what about their hydro rates, like another member indicated? What about their cost of living in terms of food? What about medication? There's a whole slew of other issues that aren't being addressed here.

At a deeper level, we really need to look at the question of affordability. Life is more and more expensive. Auto insurance is a huge issue. Seniors want to get around, particularly in rural communities. Seniors want to get around in communities in the suburbs. We're paying the highest auto insurance rates in the country. There are a number of issues that we're faced with. So let's look at those issues.

Let's look at the fact that our seniors on fixed incomes can't afford to pay their heating bills. Many people across Ontario live in regions where they literally have to decide between putting food on the table—buying groceries—and paying their heating bill. This is a real issue facing many seniors. Many seniors are faced with the issue of how they are going to access health care. How are they going to get the health care they need, so that they can stay well enough to be able to remain in their homes? A number of issues are present right now that need to be addressed, and this is one small sliver of the demographic of seniors.

1640

We need to really look at the heart of the question, which is affordability and what we can do to make seniors' lives more affordable so that they can live with dignity, so that they can afford the necessities of life. I think that's the question we should ask ourselves: What can we do to truly improve the lives of seniors and make it more affordable for them?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Thornhill has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's very interesting, listening to my colleagues, because they come from all sides, they wear all stripes, and in many ways, they said the same things, just using different words to say them. I want to thank the members from Timiskaming—Cochrane, Peterborough, Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock and Bramalea—Gore—Malton for their comments, and I'd like to address them specifically because, as I say, there is some interplay.

The member from Timiskaming—Cochrane immediately acknowledged that the bill could have done more: "We could have done more for seniors." He's absolutely

correct. But it's a lot like the budget: Your party sits on its hands because you'd rather take the crumbs than actually force these people to do something for the province of Ontario. For that, while I respect the position you find yourselves in, I say you have to do more as well. You come to this place to take a position.

As far as my friend from Peterborough is concerned, what he likes to do is tie the truth to a desk and walk out those doors, it's being stretched so far. Yes, it's true, you can walk into a Home Hardware in Peterborough or anywhere else and you can buy the various things that you need to renovate your house. But this bill doesn't apply to those people. They're driving their cars to the Home Depot, they're getting out and walking in and they're buying lumber to build a renovation. That's not the healthy homes tax credit; that's people who have the money and the mobility and don't qualify.

My friend from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock talks about staying in the home for a period of time. In deference to my colleague from Leeds—Grenville, that was addressed by the bill that failed, the one that was sponsored by all parties and still was voted down by the Liberals and adopted for their platform, which was my property tax deferral bill.

Finally, my friend from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, same thing: You're talking about all these different costs that beset seniors. Don't vote for this bill; make them go broader.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down the third party lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Unanimous consent: Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill 2, the healthy homes renovation tax credit. I also want to thank and acknowledge all the previous speakers to this bill for their comments and insights. For many of us with aging parents, this bill provides an opportunity to set aside our political agendas and really take our time to get it right.

As it stands now, this bill is well-meaning but only moderately successful in addressing the financial burdens faced by seniors who are wishing to stay in their homes. I hope we can all agree that our seniors deserve to live with dignity. For me, this means looking at the whole picture and asking the right questions, questions like, who does this bill help and who does it exclude? What are we doing to address the seniors who are shut out? How can this bill be improved to help as many seniors as possible?

The reality is that far too many seniors are living in poverty. Back in 2008, Statistics Canada put the number of seniors living in poverty at 5.8%, and the number of single elderly women living in poverty was 17.1%. Most important to note is that the statistics were produced before the global recession hit. We all know that the numbers we have have only gotten worse.

So my question is, how bad does it have to be before we implement meaningful strategies that address the needs of our society's most vulnerable? I say the current data shows us that we are already there.

The fact is, in 2012, seniors 85-plus years of age have become the fastest-growing segment of Canadian society. The number of seniors in Canada is projected to increase from 4.2 million to 9.8 million between 2005 and 2036. The seniors' share of the population is expected to almost double, increasing from 13.2% to 24.5% during this period.

We do know that the number of seniors living below Statistics Canada's low-income cut-off jumped nearly 25% between 2007-08 to 250,000 from 204,000, according to Campaign 2000.

Economists say that women make up as much as 80% of the increase in seniors' poverty, according to the *Globe and Mail* on November 25, 2010. Roughly 40% of seniors live in households with incomes below \$30,000, according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. More than 150,000 eligible seniors across Canada do not currently receive the guaranteed income supplement designed to help low-income seniors, according to the *Perspective on Labour and Income*, July 2009, Statistics Canada. Finally, 6.3% of households assisted by food banks report that a pension is a primary source of income, says HungerCount 2009, Food Banks Canada.

The numbers paint a very dismal picture for the seniors of Ontario. As our community ages, there is greater strain on our social service agencies but, more importantly, many of our seniors opt to go without services they need and supports they are entitled to. Some go without due to the lack of family support; many have disabilities; and others simply cannot navigate the cumbersome eligibility process required to access many programs.

Back in December 2011, I read an article entitled "Contest Uncovers Hidden Tragedy of Impoverished Seniors" by CTV that I want to share with all of you today.

"The founders of a Toronto agency were so struck by what they say is a hidden crisis of Canadian seniors living in poverty, they decided to hold a contest to do something about it.

"Peter Cook, who runs Seniors for Seniors, an agency that hires younger seniors to run errands for older seniors, is the mastermind of the contest, along with his wife. A few weeks ago, they put out a call to social workers to nominate needy Toronto-area seniors who could benefit from a prize of \$1,000 a month for a year.

"The stories they got back were heart-wrenching.

"The company has already received dozens of submissions and will announce the 'winner' on Friday.

"Loucia and Andrew Linkert make up one couple who was nominated for the contest. The couple has been married for almost for three decades, getting by for many years with his work as a jeweller and her work as a truck driver.

"But a few years back Loucia, 59, was diagnosed with liver cancer, and then Andrew, 72, had a heart attack and

was diagnosed with Parkinson's. They became embroiled in money woes.

"These days, the couple survives on pasta and bread.

"We can't afford milk. He should have milk every day," Loucia says of Andrew. "I go to food banks, I try to get food vouchers."

"The couple struggles for money every month. After they pay the \$1,000 rent and pay for utilities and other expenses, there's little money left for extras. There are months when Andrew can't afford the \$50-a-month dispensing fees on his Parkinson's drugs, so he goes without.

"I can't afford it. I am embarrassed, I am hurt and I am mad," he says.

"The couple tried taking in a tenant, but the tenants refused to pay their rent and then robbed them of the last of their money."

I cannot begin to tell you how moved I was reading this article. These are our parents, our grandparents, our aunts, our uncles. How could it be that we have so many stories of indignity and shame after a lifetime of hard work? And yet, here we are debating a bill that intends to help only those seniors who are in their own home.

I read this bill, and I see a baby step that shuts its eyes to the real challenges facing seniors in Ontario. Sure, this bill proposes to keep seniors in their long-time family homes, but fails to address the real issues that are forcing seniors from them. With so many of our seniors living in poverty, skyrocketing property taxes, soaring electricity and home heating costs due to an unfair HST, this bill offers them no reprieve.

The bill makes a small contribution in terms of providing financial assistance to seniors with increasing mobility problems who wish to remain in their homes. For this reason alone, I am prepared to support it.

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I think many people believe that seniors have the right to stay in their long-time family homes, and it is our job to help them achieve that right. But the reality is that most seniors can't afford \$10,000 to renovate their homes to make their homes more accessible.

This bill also does not include any provisions to assist with affordability of upfront costs of renovations. As it's currently proposed, this bill allows eligible seniors a tax credit of up to 15% of eligible costs, to a maximum of \$10,000 per year. This translates to a maximum credit of \$1,500 per year. In the case of a couple, both of whom claim a house as their principal residence, it can only be \$10,000 annually and does not include a lifetime cap. In other words, it would be possible for seniors who can afford it to receive a maximum of \$10,000 per year per household of eligible expenses and a tax credit of \$1,500 that can be claimed each year. As a refundable tax credit, seniors who pay no taxes would be entitled to receive the full refund.

While I agree that seniors need financial assistance, I am unsure if we can achieve effective and appropriate financial support through a renovation tax credit. I suggest we look to other provinces like Quebec, who

have gone beyond the tax credits by including programs that offer financial assistance to low-income earners age 65 or over who need to make minor adaptations to their homes or apartments in order to continue to live there safely, independently and, most importantly, with dignity. Their program does not limit itself to 15% of costs but rather provides full reimbursement of costs up to \$3,500 if the work is done by an approved, licensed contractor.

A program like this would be far more useful for low-income seniors struggling with affordability, and yet the bill before us today offers much, much less. I am genuinely eager to understand why this government would not propose a funding program patterned along the lines of the Quebec legislation that is aimed solely at low-income seniors before proposing legislation that severely compromises their participation.

Low-income seniors are not the only group left out of this bill. Ontario businesses will now find themselves on the outside of this opportunity. The government is happy to boast about stimulating \$800 million in home renovation activity and that it will create 10,500 jobs throughout the Ontario economy annually, but the government isn't listening, once again, when it comes to proactively investing in the province. Here is another clear opportunity to prioritize buy-Ontario strategies that has been ignored.

I and my NDP colleagues are quite eager to bring this government around to the idea that buy-Ontario initiatives are the right way forward for this province. Ontarians are looking to this Legislature for more than leadership; they are looking to be valued. Buy-Ontario strategies are more than an important financial tool. They send a clear message to the people of this province that we are prepared to invest in them. If the government claims this program will drum up 10,500 jobs, why not include buy-Ontario options on either the construction materials or medical assistance devices to increase that job creation number even higher?

Or how about including a strategy that takes into account soaring property taxes? It seems to me that many seniors are facing the choice of leaving their homes, not because of their inability to afford the renovations but because of their property tax bill. This tax credit also does nothing about the long-standing problem seniors have with soaring property taxes, which is a greater factor in seniors not being able to stay in their own homes. I've received emails from my riding of London—Fanshawe from seniors who are immediately in need of financial relief from their property taxes and fear losing their homes. Once again, this bill is silent—silent to those who need our voice the most.

The rising cost of home heating is another financial hurdle that seniors have expressed that prevents the ability to stay in their homes. With increases of more than 8%, it is not surprising that seniors are feeling more financial pressure to leave than ever before.

The NDP has been calling for removal of the HST from home heating costs for some time. My colleague

Mike Mantha, from Algoma-Manitoulin, proposed Bill 4, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide for a rebate of the Ontario portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax in respect of certain home heating costs.

The HST costs the average family budget hundreds of dollars more a year, yet who does it hit the hardest? Seniors. It is seniors who have the worst options when life's essentials become unaffordable. It is the New Democrats who have demonstrated that the HST is actually adding to the costs that Ontarians are facing.

In fact, we know that in 2009 the Liberals had a secret document that showed that the HST was going to cost Ontario families an average of \$1,500 more every year. While the Liberals would like to pretend that the HST comes from discretionary spending alone, New Democrats know that home heating is not discretionary.

Turning the furnace off just isn't an option; it's a choice. Taking the HST off home heating would save a family with two kids an average of \$100 per year. Imagine what we could do for seniors. Perhaps with these kinds of real financial supports, Ontario seniors could afford renovations to keep them in their homes. We know it will put more money back into the pockets of those Ontarians who need it the most.

I ask each member present to think about how frequently they turn on the heat in the winter and the air conditioner in the summer. Now I ask each member to think about the number of seniors in Ontario who are forced into going without. These are not choices of dignity. These are not choices we want our mothers and fathers making in their retirement.

Sadly, in many parts of the provinces, the HST takes millions away from families and is not offering one penny back in health care or reinvestment in their communities. I recall a headline from during the election that read "Unfair HST Takes \$70 Million from Windsor Families—and Not One Penny to Health Care." The people of Ontario are all too familiar with the cash grab policies of this government, and the HST is the worst of them all.

This healthy homes renovation tax credit represents a major plank in the Liberals' platform, a platform that is built on half measures for seniors. Like many bills we have seen from this government, it is rife with half measures and minimal effectiveness, and it excludes more people than it helps.

Finally, I understand that this bill, as well-intentioned as it is, is lacking in addressing the real needs of seniors in this province who are struggling to stay in their homes. Speaker, I know this because my parents are elderly, and they've struggled to keep their heat on. My dad, especially, was very much conserving the water he used, because the water bill was so high. I saw one of his bills one time. We had the opportunity and the pleasure—maybe not his pleasure, but we were buying a home, and we had a transition period when our other home closed, so we had about three months where we were kind of in limbo, and we had our things in storage. My dad was gracious enough—at the time, my mother was in a

nursing home, and my dad was living alone—to let us stay with him. I remember opening his mail. My dad's not a privacy person; he didn't mind. His water bill was \$46 for a month. I couldn't believe it.

So my dad is very cognizant, like most seniors of that generation, that—they pay cash for everything, they don't spend it if they don't have it, and they try to make every penny stretch as far as they can. They want that little nest egg, even though my dad probably doesn't have to worry about it. He's got six children who can contribute to his elderly years, when we can support him financially should there be that need. He always, always worried about being independent and having that financial stability.

My dad would not spend \$10,000 on a ramp. He would do without. His income wasn't exorbitant. He couldn't afford to do that even if he had that opportunity. He wouldn't do it. He would keep that money for his little nest egg—retirement; even though he's 82, he still thinks he's in retirement.

1700

This bill does help a small portion of the population of seniors, but not the vast majority that are on a low income and are really watching every penny so that they can remain in their home. If this bill does pass—and I will support it, because the intent of the bill is there—I hope that when it does go to committee, we really try to make it have some impact on more than just accessibility issues. The Quebec legislation that they have there seems to be something that will also be extended to helping seniors who don't have that extra money that they could spend on accessibilities but maybe need the medical devices that we talked about—or the buy Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly happy to rise today, obviously in support of Bill 2, and make a few comments in relation to what the member for London—Fanshawe had to say.

First of all, it is Bill 2. It seems extraordinary that this was the second bill presented to this House, and yet we're still here, months and months later, still talking about this bill. Happily, we will see the end of this debate shortly. But as it relates to the senior home renovation tax credit, I must say that back in September or October, last summer, when we were going through my riding, consulting with seniors at the door, at the community centres where seniors spend quite a bit of their time—very close to my constituency office, I have a wonderful relationship with the Water Street seniors' community centre—this particular proposal in our platform was something that was extremely well received. It was looked upon as something that would certainly assist seniors in staying in their own homes, and of course from the perspective of also providing a little bit of stimulation to the economy in terms of the renovations required.

Our government certainly has done a great deal for seniors, and this is why I talk to so many of our seniors about their issues. Our Aging at Home strategy has made

a dramatic impact in my riding of Oak Ridges—Markham. People are being assisted. The frail elderly are being given assistance. They are certainly aware of the financial constraints that we face as a government, and they feel that whatever we can do to assist them is of tremendous value.

I would certainly say that it's time to get on with this. Let's pass this bill and assist the seniors, which I think is what we should all be doing as much as we—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to respond to the member from London—Fanshawe on Bill 2. I'm disappointed in this legislation, I have to say. The government could have done so much more and could have done so much better.

A few years back, the federal government came out with a tax credit for renovations that made a whole lot of sense. It was far less restrictive, it had a significant impact on the economy—because it allowed you to make the decision as to what you were going to do with that tax credit to improve your home. It might have been an energy-efficiency renovation. It may have done something for the infrastructure of the building itself. It may have done something to assist those with disabilities, so something that improved the accessibility. But it made so much sense because it froze no one out.

This bill—it's Liberal bill 52 or so since they got here, that is specifically designed to knock off a political domino in their agenda. It's about the 52nd or so since I got here in 2003 and since they've been government that is not designed, really, to help a broad segment of the population; it's designed so that the members opposite here can go in their constituencies, have a coffee klatch at some club with some folks and say, "Look what we did for you," when really, if you want to help the economy, if you want to help seniors, if you want to help families, you bring in a bill that allows them to decide where they're going to put that tax credit.

I'm very disappointed. We should not be wasting our time on this. There's better things—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate, as always, on G2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act. I guess I'll point to one of the measures that New Democrats took issue with. I am going to speak to the bill afterwards, so I'll go into detail a little bit further.

One of them is that the bill carries no provisions for any domestic procurement in terms of a buy-Ontario mandate. My honourable colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke referenced the home renovation tax credit implemented by the federal government in, I believe, 2010. It was a \$3-billion home renovation tax credit that also did not carry any domestic procurement provisions. The result was that in bordering areas across the country we had folks who were going across into the States and purchasing the materials that they needed to do the renovations on their home and actually spending

that money in the United States. It was a boon to neighbouring jurisdictions in the US.

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's the federal government's fault.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, but what I'm saying to you, Honourable Minister, is that you have a chance to actually enact some procurement measures here so that we ensure that—because we are at par. Our dollar is at par, and if you come down to Windsor today, you will be enticed to go to Lowe's there, because you'll see that there's cheaper materials. If you need to buy an accessible toilet, you might want to do it in the States, but that doesn't necessarily help the area of Windsor, where we have the highest unemployment rate in the province and, actually, in Canada. Free trade—you guys signed the free trade deals, every one of the trade deals.

Regardless, it's one measure that I'll elaborate on a little bit further, but one that I think the government could improve on.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen to the comments from the member from London—Fanshawe. We've taken a number of significant initiatives that help seniors in the province of Ontario. I think one of the most important initiatives that we took after we were given the privilege of forming government—in 2008, of course, we signed a landmark deal with AMO and the city of Toronto to upload a lot of costs from the property taxpayer that were downloaded in 1998-99. Madam Speaker, if you take the time to chat with mayors—or indeed, I recommend you talk to treasurers at the municipal level—they will give you some in-depth, detailed analysis on how the uploading of costs—of OW, ODSP, court security costs, matching land ambulance costs—on a 50-50 basis has indeed moderated the increases on property taxes across the province of Ontario since 2008. Then we introduced the property tax grant for seniors, which is a cash grant for seniors across the province of Ontario of up to \$900, and that complements the property tax credit that our seniors can also receive across the province of Ontario.

The last time I was up for two minutes, I did talk about the Home Depot at the corner of Park and Lansdowne. I'll take this opportunity to talk about Home Hardware, which is further on Lansdowne Street West. I had the opportunity to be there three weeks ago, and you see a lot of Canadian-made products, such as Crane bathtub equipment, which is made in Canada, made in Ontario. This tax credit helps seniors buy those made-in-Ontario products that they can put in their homes, improve their mobility to get access to showers and bathtubs, and indeed not only take advantage of the tax credit, but generate jobs right here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from London—Fanshawe has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I didn't write down all the ridings of the members that spoke to my discussion, so I do apologize. But I want to thank them all for their response and their remarks with regards to my presentation.

Again, I don't think anyone here disagrees that we need to help seniors. I don't think anyone here disagrees that seniors need to stay in their homes as long as they can. But it's the tools that we have in place to make that happen for seniors. Part of it is, as I mentioned, the affordability piece.

1710

I think health is also an issue. The NDP has talked about having services for seniors while they're at home, like shovelling their driveways or running errands for seniors, as the gentleman in the Seniors for Seniors group is going to propose and promote that contest so that someone can have those services. Those are all part of staying in your home. And the piece we're talking about today, of course, is the renovations piece with regard to accessibility needs, physical needs for seniors to stay in their homes.

The question that comes to light is that the seniors who are most populous in Ontario—that we've got statistics on, which I read earlier—are making under \$30,000 a year. That's the higher percentage of seniors. So when we're talking about mobility tax credits for healthy home renovations, it's not going to help those seniors. We certainly want seniors who have worked hard but have a meagre pension to remain in their homes, and to do that, this has to be stretched out a little more, as I mentioned before with regard to medical devices. Quebec has that legislation. So when it goes to committee, I hope we're going to look at stretching this more to help more seniors remain in their homes longer.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Todd Smith: Good member. Very good member.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you, Speaker, and thanks to my colleagues for that warm welcome this afternoon.

I'm pleased to rise today to discuss Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act, 2012. This bill was tabled way back in December of last year, I believe, and it would seem that it's an important topic to debate, because it's relevant to quite a few Ontarians.

On the surface, this piece of legislation sounds like a decent idea. The healthy homes renovation tax credit is a policy that seems to be helping seniors. It seems to be supporting families and supporting our communities. But if you look a little deeper at this piece of legislation, you realize that it's not all that good.

The Liberal government has argued that this legislation is about protecting the economy and helping the trades. Speaker, I disagree. This bill is not really about seniors; it's not really about helping the trades. What it's really about is Liberal politics. I find it strange, given the economic state of Ontario, that we are debating legislation that is in favour, at the end of the day, of more spending. It does not make any logical sense, but for some reason this government seems to think that increasing spending is something they should continue to do. Of course, I've been on the record many times, as have many of my colleagues, that overspending by this gov-

ernment is taking Ontario down the path of a \$411-billion debt.

We should be debating a plan to get the 600,000 men and women who are unemployed in this province back to work. This government should be introducing a plan to address the \$16-billion deficit and a plan to deal with this massive debt we currently have in Ontario and a plan to get our economy growing and back on its feet again. Yet we are here debating this bill that is completely ignoring the economic crisis Ontario is facing.

I refer all members to this great magazine that is sent out every couple of months, the Fraser Forum. They have a really good article in this month's edition: "Ontario Budget 2012: A Missed Opportunity" by this government and by our finance minister. I just want to read a couple of paragraphs:

"In March, Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan had one of those rare opportunities of which politicians can only dream. With his province heading towards a fiscal crisis caused by out-of-control spending and mounting debt, an opposition sympathetic to the need to deal with the problem, a public that expects his government to tackle the deficit ... and a media that understands the need for significant fiscal restraint, the stars were perfectly aligned for" Dwight "Duncan.

"Call it his 'Paul Martin' opportunity. Unfortunately, unlike Martin, his friend and mentor, Duncan didn't seize the opportunity."

It's proof of what we've been saying since the budget was delivered: that the will of this government just isn't strong at all to deal with the fiscal crisis and the jobs crisis that we find ourselves in in this province.

Speaker, I've been serving my community as an MPP, as many others who were just elected, since October 2011, and I just cannot accustom myself to the reckless spending that's taking place in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario today. We have seen this time and again from the party opposite, and no matter how many times we tell them to stop, they just continue to call for new spending.

As politicians, we're here to serve the people and to take care of those in society who need a hand up. I think that everyone in this Legislature would agree with me when I say that that we all have mentors and family members who are now seniors, who live in the communities we serve, whom we owe a great deal to for the guidance that they have provided in our lives. We feel that we owe it to them to stand up for them when they are not able to. Helping seniors is an essential aspect for me in being a member of provincial Parliament in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and one that I think we all agree with.

Helping people who are most vulnerable is an important aspect for all of us, as legislators in Ontario. For me, that's both ends of the age scale. Seniors have less opportunity to go out and do this for themselves, and young children are in the same situation as well, so we have to provide help for them, as legislators.

This legislation that we are debating here today that was introduced back in December does not stand up for

seniors and it really doesn't help them. If you look beneath the surface of this bill, Bill 2—and I'm talking about looking beyond the title of "healthy homes tax credit," which is yet another attempt to make a bill sound like a good idea—you'll see that the bill, like almost every other bill introduced by this Liberal government, is essentially empty.

The government has become expert at catchy phrases and excellent titles but has failed at developing effective policy that would make Ontario a better place to live for our seniors and a better place to do business for businesses in this province.

We've had nine years of Liberal policies that have been little more than legislation with a good title, and look where Ontario has wound up. The only change Ontario has seen under this Premier and under this government is record-breaking debt and unemployment. That is a legacy of the Dalton McGuinty government.

Speaker, the PC Party, here in opposition, want to help seniors, but we want to be effective in the help that we provide. We want to be effective in everything that we do in this Legislature, and Bill 2 doesn't pass the test.

Let's take a look at this legislation and see how little it actually does. Let's consider how much of an impact, if any, Bill 2 could actually have on Ontario families and seniors as a mechanism to stimulate the economy.

First of all, only seniors—65-plus is the definition in Ontario—would qualify for the tax credit proposed by the bill, which equals about 13% of Ontario's population. That's about 1.8 million people. The broad base of seniors is 1.8 million people in Ontario. Of all the people living in this province, the tax credit could potentially apply to 13%. The median income for Ontario seniors is \$25,000 per individual or \$45,000 per couple. That translates into approximately \$2,000 up to \$3,700 of income per month, depending on whether you're single or living as a couple.

In order to qualify for the maximum tax credit of \$1,500—15% of the maximum expenditure of \$10,000. So a senior has to actually spend that \$10,000; a senior actually has to have that \$10,000. When the senior spends that amount, he or she, or the couple, is actually out of pocket \$8,500. That is a significant amount of money—nearly an unreachable sum of money for many, especially given the fact that a lot of individual savings have taken a serious hit in the past few years. As some of my colleagues who rose today in the House before me mentioned—and I hear this all the time in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and I have calls from many seniors in Peterborough—the fact is that seniors in this province can't afford these outrageous electricity bills that we're seeing. The hydro bills have doubled, actually, under this government, and are due to go up another 46%. I hear very sad stories from seniors in Peterborough, and I'm sure the member opposite, the MPP for Peterborough, hears from the same people himself.

1720

Let's say that a senior was able to scrape together enough to pay for the renovations. But not just any reno-

vation qualifies; only renovations that the Liberal government has decided are acceptable or may decide through regulation are acceptable, so more of this “Premier Dad knows best for everyone in the province.”

A senior living alone in the province of Ontario has to spend nearly half of his or her annual income to get back \$1,500 as a tax credit. Any person who thinks about the legislation for even a second realizes that it's not helping the people who need it and it's not doing much of anything. We have to pass legislation that is meaningful and legislation that is really, truly going to help people. Bill 2 isn't up to that test.

How many Ontario men and women, let alone seniors, do you know who can put up nearly half their annual income for a renovation? Not very many. The number of people this program would apply to shrinks again by a significant number. It begins with 1.8 million, but that drops based on income and drops based on marital status. As if that weren't enough, seniors receiving ODSP benefits are excluded from qualifying for the tax credit, and that restricts people even further. Then, your renovations have to meet specific criteria—we haven't gone there yet—which means that, of those who could afford to renovate their homes, an even smaller fraction of those would get the refund.

Do you see what is happening here, Speaker? Slowly, more and more people are being excluded with each requirement.

People who can afford to spend \$10,000 to renovate their homes don't have to wait for a government cheque or a tax credit. They do the renovation in any event. That's what they do. Meanwhile, those who need the help who cannot afford the renovations, who don't have the cash to do what they need to do, are still left sitting in the dust. This bill, at the end of the day, like most pieces of Liberal legislation since I came to the House on October 6, is like a mean joke because it offers hope and then proceeds to deny the majority the help it promises to provide.

I believe that it is essential to manage your finances in a responsible way so that in return, you can help others. This is no different than a government structure. If government cannot manage their finances and ensure that all their bank accounts are in order, then they cannot be pursuing additional spending such as this tax credit.

Speaker, let me just reiterate again: I know I get up time and time again and talk about this, but it's critical that all members, especially members on the other side of the House who are maybe blinded by their own talking points, remind themselves when they look in the mirror that their government is essentially bankrupting the province of Ontario. We have a jobs and a debt crisis. This needs to be taken very seriously. We're talking about future generations of Ontarians who are going to be paying for the last nine years of total fiscal mismanagement on behalf of the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government.

This Bill 2 is purely political. This bill is aimed at tugging at the hearts of the people of Ontario in the hopes

of distracting Ontarians from the fiscal reality that this province is facing. This bill is meant to keep the government benches busy—keep the members from falling asleep, in some cases—but really it won't do anything to change the course we're on, the road that Dalton McGuinty has led this province down.

Again, let me remind this House that we are staring directly in the face of a \$30-billion deficit and a \$411-billion debt. We have 600,000 men and women out of work—a serious jobs and spending crisis right here today in the province of Ontario. There are billion-dollar scandals like Ornge unfolding daily, and this government is desperate to change the channel to make Ontario voters forget about the poor leadership and mismanagement coming from the Liberal government here in Toronto. Today they're trying to do that with this bill, Bill 2.

There is no need for this province, once the shining light of Confederation, to be faced with a \$30-billion deficit. There's no reason Ontario should be condemned to a continuing stagnant economic growth regime.

On our side of the House, the path we're on simply, Speaker, just isn't good enough, so I'll continue, and my colleagues beside me will as well, to promote our plan, our Ontario PC plan to finally reduce the size and cost of government, to build and grow our economy with new jobs that will ensure that Ontario will lead again. This is our number one priority, Speaker, and it is the primary issue that we must address. Until the debt and spending is under control and jobs are returning to Ontario, the PC caucus cannot support any additional spending.

Speaker, we owe this to the people of Ontario. We owe this to Ontario businesses, the small, medium and large employers across this great province, and we owe this to all those who chose to make Ontario home as well as those born and raised here. They've invested their lives in this great province and they know, like we do in the PC caucus, what Ontario is capable of being, capable of actually becoming: great again.

In order to have the kind of social policy that we want and that the people of Ontario want, we have to make sure that we have the financial resources that are required to support our social services and provide the kind of government that Ontario families, including seniors, are asking for.

The Liberal government is again placing the cart before the horse, just as they always do with their policies. Speaking about great governments of the past, I do proudly stand up. The previous PC government, let's not forget, created a million jobs in the province of Ontario; they created the environment for a million jobs to be created. Today, under this government, we're faced with 600,000 people unemployed. I'll tell you, Speaker, the members on the opposite side of this House should sit up, they should take note, and they should be listening to what our caucus members are saying here. They should actually put their Globe and Mail away and actually pay attention when we're talking about 600,000 people unemployed. Of course, the minister isn't listening. She's still reading her Globe and Mail.

Interjection: Ottawa Citizen, actually.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Or the Ottawa Citizen. If she's not interested in learning something, then she can continue down that path—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Just a point: I'd ask the member to confine his comments to the bill and not the members present.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: As I was saying, if the party opposite really cared about the people of Ontario, they would address the growing fiscal crisis. They would get their books back in order, reduce the size of government and get out of the way so that business creators and entrepreneurs can create jobs and build our economy. We must get those 600,000 men and women back to work, Speaker. It is time that the party opposite, the government, addresses the real issues Ontario is dealing with and stops playing these political games. Stop spending and start truly helping the people of Ontario.

Again, I just can't support Bill 2. Our caucus won't be supporting Bill 2. We're in a fiscal crisis in the province of Ontario, and these bills are just adding to that debt crisis. Again, I just refer to the recent edition of the Fraser Forum where they talk about Canada's 2012 budgets, the federal budget and all provincial and territorial budgets, and they talk about a lack of leadership in Ontario in tackling the debt and jobs crisis. Again, as we've been saying many times in this House, the finance minister in this government is missing the opportunity to turn the ship around in the province, to get Ontario back on the right track and truly make this the greatest province in the great country of Canada.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kenora-Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to thank the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for his contribution to this important discussion. I want to start off by talking about some of the things that I agree with. I agree that this bill, despite going to committee, where I was hopeful that we would flesh things out and improve the bill, hasn't really changed all that much. I agree with him that I don't think it goes far enough because, for those whom it's supposed to help, they have to have that money upfront. Unfortunately, a lot of people just don't have the money, and if they were to have the money upfront, chances are, as the member pointed out, they probably wouldn't need to take advantage of this tax credit.

Where I fundamentally disagree with the member—although I do appreciate, again, his contribution to this debate—is his notion of the deserving and undeserving; that somehow this bill was acceptable because it was going to help the deserving poor, being seniors and children. I think we have to go beyond that. I know that the Tories talk about exercising financial restraint, but I think in this case it's a matter of spending wisely. In many cases, it's not that we don't have the money; it's that we're not spending our dollars wisely and maximizing what we get in return for those dollars. In many

cases, if this were to be implemented properly in an effective way, it would actually be an investment; it would enable our seniors to stay in their homes longer, and that would free up some long-term-care beds, which we know are more expensive. So it's a case of spending a little to get a lot. Again, unfortunately, this bill fails dramatically on that mark. I do agree that it's merely a good sound bite, but to me, exercising this financial restraint would be spending wisely.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I took the unique opportunity to listen to the speech from the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex from both sides of the House, and it was an interesting perspective. I must say, we talk about fiscal responsibility. The man that has always been described as one of Ontario's greatest Premiers—there's great respect for him—William Grenville Davis, Premier for 14 years, actually ran 14 straight deficits when he was Premier of the province of Ontario. I just think that's important to get on the record this afternoon.

As I said, I listened very intently to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex from both sides of the House—a great perspective. About a week ago, I had the opportunity to be in Home Hardware on Simcoe Street in downtown Peterborough. Again, I'm talking to my friends, the seniors who are coming in and buying bathroom equipment, because they are saving their receipts to take advantage of this particular bill. I said, "Madam, don't chat with me; talk to my friends in the official opposition. They're slowing this bill down. Give them a call, tell them to speed up; collect your receipts and then you can make the application for your tax credit."

Lowe's is also coming to Peterborough. They're another one of those home renovation companies. They looked at the Peterborough market and they know it's a great market to be in. And gosh, this bill is going so slow I'll be able to be there to cut the ribbon when Lowe's opens in Peterborough, to tell them to come on in, buy all that equipment, take advantage of the tax credit, and that will be another great addition to the retail community in Peterborough.

We're doing a number of things for seniors in the province of Ontario. The \$900 tax grant is very, very popular with our seniors because they know that we've made great progress in uploading those costs that devastated the property taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

Again, I want to thank the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex on a very thoughtful speech this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds-Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's interesting that the member for Peterborough spoke about—I think he has mentioned a Home Hardware and also a Home Depot. I think it's very appropriate that the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex spoke, because his family has run McNaughton's Home

Hardware Building Centre in Newbury for decades. He knows the business of home renovations, and I know that he spends a lot of his time on the weekend in his riding—not just at his family store, because I know that he sees a lot of constituents both there and at the many events he attends. He's a great new member and he has shown incredible enthusiasm since he joined us. He's done a tremendous job for the constituents of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. He's always seemed to be able to grasp the local issue and make sure that it's represented here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. So I want to commend him.

I'm glad that he quoted the Fraser Forum—I read that same article a couple of days ago—and I'm glad that he put those comments in the record, because there is a fiscal crisis here in the province. I do believe he was exactly right when he spoke about the fact that this government has failed to reduce the size and cost of government. They've also failed to remove the impediments on those job creators. I'm glad that he, in his capacity as critic for the ministry of industry, trade and economic development, was able to put those points forward, because I know that when I spoke to businesses in my riding, they expressed that same concern.

This bill does not address seniors on a broad basis. It's fatally flawed, as I mentioned earlier this afternoon, and I'm glad that he was able to put those comments forward on the floor this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd also like to once again add my voice to this debate, specifically on the comments of the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, but I'd like to focus on the member from Peterborough. The folks from Home Hardware in New Liskeard and Rona in New Liskeard and Tim-br Mart in Earlton haven't been experiencing the senior stampede that seems to be happening in Peterborough. It's not that we haven't been talking about this bill but, quite frankly, if you really want to keep seniors in their homes in northern Ontario, there's a lot of things we can do before putting grab bars on the bathtub.

I believe that the seniors' income in the north is actually slightly lower than the rest of the parts of the province. If their average income is \$20,000, then the maximum of \$10,000 or \$15,000 is just unattainable. Quite frankly, if you're going to get \$3 or \$4 or \$10—if you're going to make a program, make it so as many people can qualify as possible on as many things as possible.

I'm sure some of those things were put forward in the committee. Really, if the goal is to keep as many seniors in their homes as possible and save the economy as a whole, then the broader we can make this bill, the better it would be. From what I have read after it came back from committee, it hasn't really gotten any broader. That is from our perspective. Yes, it's a small step forward; we're not denying that. But it could have helped more people, and that would have helped the economy as a whole. Unfortunately, it's just a very small step.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you to the MPPs who added some comments after I did: the member from Kenora—Rainy River; from Peterborough of course, who had some pretty inspiring comments during his two minutes—

Mr. Steve Clark: Questionable.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Yes, some questionable comments—my good friend from Leeds—Grenville; and the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

I think the one thing that we did provide for some of these companies today across Canada is some excellent advertising. So for all those people who are watching the Ontario Legislature at home or via the legislative website, I'm sure they're rushing out now to some of the great stores we have in this province.

I will say I'm glad that my friend from Leeds—Grenville talked about Home Hardware, because it is one of the great Ontario stories. They're from St. Jacobs. There are about 1,000 stores now nationwide, and they really employ a lot of people.

1740

Speaker, back to Bill 2: The essence of what we're saying on this side of the House is that it's just a bill that really isn't going to do very much. It's a fluff bill. The title sounds good, but it really isn't going to help a lot of seniors.

What this government needs to focus on, and what all MPPs from all three parties need to focus on, is the debt challenge and the deficit challenge that this Liberal government has gotten Ontario into. I think we need a serious approach. I know we've been calling for a legislated wage freeze and we've been advocating initiatives to get the fiscal house in order. Again, with a \$30-billion deficit, a debt approaching \$411 billion, things need to change in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Merci infiniment, madame la Présidente. C'est toujours un plaisir de me lever et d'ajouter mes commentaires à ce discours on G2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act. I'll dispense with the obligatory partisanship and self-serving discourse that typically dominates some of the debate in here because I think we've got to get right to the facts, and it doesn't necessarily help the cause.

What I would like to begin with is just the overview of the bill, the purpose of Bill 2 and the intent. I like to look at intent and know what the intent is. But I believe the purpose of Bill 2, as it's written here, is to implement a major plank in the Liberal platform calling for a tax credit to assist seniors in making modifications needed to allow seniors to stay in their homes. So there it is, plain and simple: "We're going to offer a tax credit on renovations for accessibility measures implemented in a resident's home, a tax credit of up to \$1,500 on expenses of \$10,000."

I think it's a practical idea, a practical concept, given that we know that the longer seniors can stay in their own family dwellings, the longer they can stay at home, the better it is not only for themselves, their families, their own personal health, but also, ultimately, for our health care system. I believe that is the intent that the government is searching for, to make some steps towards that.

What we on this side, as New Democrats, are concerned about is the progress of the measures. We see this as a pressing issue, our crisis in home care and long-term care.

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Madam Speaker, have we got a sidebar going on here? There we go. Thank you. I'll call them to order.

We do have a crisis in home care and long-term care that needs to be addressed, and it needs to be addressed in several ways, one of which is building more long-term-care facilities from the outset. But, secondly, it's finding ways to keep folks in their homes longer: providing access to care, in-home support, affordable drugs, affordable care and things that will make their lives easier.

That being said, New Democrats have proposed ideas to make this bill better. That's quite in contrast to what my friends in the opposition have been doing. During the hour and a half, two hours—how long have we been in here debating this bill?—I felt some heat from you guys. You're being critical of our party for even supporting this bill in the first place. At least we're here and at least we're showing up and doing what I think members of this province asked us to do, to be critical.

One of the reasons we haven't been able to talk about this is because the official opposition has rung the bell for the last four months in this House. Again, it angers me because it takes away from my ability as a legislator, as a member, to criticize them. I can't do it when the bells are ringing. I've got to walk out and mope that I don't get the opportunity to criticize some of the inadequacies in this bill. So here we are today; I'm pleased to do that.

One of the things that we've talked about are the rising costs just in terms of general affordability for seniors in this province. One of the measures supported by the Conservative parties federally and provincially, as well as the Liberal parties, has been the HST, and we know that's one measure that we've been critical about from its inception.

I am proud to stand as a New Democrat, standing against that real downloading of tax burden on to the middle class and particularly those on fixed incomes. We know that it is adding to their financial burdens: the increase on hydro and home heating and all the other issues that weren't actually affected by the HST prior to its imposition.

One of the reasons that we were proud to introduce as our first measure—my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin introduced his private member's bill to eliminate the HST on home heating and—

Ms. Laurie Scott: We're with you.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And you're with us on that one. Well, you should have been with us from the beginning. You should have got your federal colleagues to not bring that measure about. We do this a lot in here—you guys do this; you guys do that. But the biggest one that I've ever seen was between Flaherty and the minister from Windsor—Tecumseh when they brought in that HST. That's where we had a chance.

Ms. Laurie Scott: The province's choice. The Liberals decided to do that.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm proud that provinces like Manitoba, an NDP government, did not impose the HST, even though that deal was offered to them, the \$2.6 billion, I think, that Ontario got—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —or \$4.3 billion; I'm sorry. But there was a payout there to take on the HST regime that Ontario jumped at, as well as British Columbia. Now they're feeling the effects, and there's a Liberal government that's going to be replaced by a New Democrat government there very soon, because we understood from the outset that the harmonized sales tax was going to hurt the people who could afford it the least. Ultimately, it's one of the measures that we talk about in how this bill should be improved, because it doesn't go nearly far enough.

Something also that we've talked about—there are references in here to a federal piece of legislation that was called the home renovation tax credit, just straight up home renovation tax credit. I think the premise of that federal bill, in conjunction with a similar provincial bill that offered up to \$10,000, offered a tax credit on purchases of up to \$10,000 on renovations around your home that I think essentially made a home more energy-efficient. That was cancelled not only from the federal government side, but the provincial program was cancelled as well. But it worked. It was actually a good program. It got a lot of good catchment, because not only did people understand that it was worthwhile to make those investments in their homes to make them more energy-efficient, but it also worked on the back end in terms of creating jobs. Obviously, people have to do that work to make those renovations. I understand that concept.

That being said, it's one of the measures that we think could be improved here in ensuring that we are recognizing that domestic work and domestic procurement actually makes more sense than just a blanket—you know, who knows where you order it from if you need an accessible toilet or an accessible bathtub or lumber from who knows where. We think, actually, the province should promote Ontario businesses and promote Ontario workers and ensure that there's a buy-Ontario strategy here and provisions in terms of procurement.

My friend from Elgin-Middlesex-London quite often references his family's ownership of the Home Hardware, which is wonderful. I'd love to ensure that we shopped exclusively at those small businesses within the

context of this program. I'm sure my honourable colleague wouldn't want to see the majority—I know he's going to vote against this bill, but if the majority of the money is flowing outside—

Interjection: Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. Thank you very much.

Let me tell you, just in Windsor, we've got a population of roughly 300,000 in Windsor, and when the dollar is at par, people, even though it's against their better judgment—they don't want to go over to the States, but when they see a bag of milk in the local grocery store at \$4 and you can go across the river at Kroger and get it for a buck fifty, they do it. They don't want to, but they have to. It's one of the things we should certainly be looking at in terms of ensuring that if we're going to entice people to make those renovations to their homes, we at least ensure that some of our domestic and small businesses are benefiting from those large purchases.

1750

There are also some other programs similar to this in other jurisdictions that have had some really wonderful results. Again, the goal or the intent ultimately should be—I hope it is, and it should be—helping seniors stay in their home and helping them to afford that life, being in their home, having it be accessible to them and to their family members so that they can receive the care that they may need. That means accessible beds. That means, again, fixtures, renovations to ensure that their kitchen is ergonomically correct. Those are huge costs that seniors could have to incur. In Quebec, they have a program that provides financial assistance to low-income seniors.

And there's another aspect that I think we missed. You're trying to help, you want to help, and I commend you for the intent. But should we help those who need the help the most right off the bat? I think you get maybe even a larger multiplier on it, because those who need the help the most are the ones that eventually cost us a lot as well. They need more assistance, and if we can help them and be proactive and preventive at the front end and ensure that we retrofit their homes to the maximum that we can afford, I know that the benefit on the back end will ensue.

In Quebec—let me talk about that again. Quebec has a program that provides financial assistance to low-income seniors aged 65 or over who need to make minor adaptations to their house or apartment in order to continue to live there safely and independently. Here's the great thing about the program: The program does not limit itself to the 15% scale on the \$10,000 investment but rather provides full reimbursement of costs up to \$3,500 if the work is done by an approved, licensed contractor. Such a program would be more useful for low-income seniors than the proposed credit but obviously would not benefit all other seniors. What they're doing in La Belle Province is they're identifying that there is a segment of seniors who need more help than others immediately. In that light, they are able to access

more money. That's what we're talking about here, resources.

The program here, in this case, under G2, is not income tested. I know there are other bills that have come through this House that do raise some concerns from time to time that those who don't need this type of program could actually access it. I think that would be worthwhile taking a look at. Again, there are so many different aspects in this bill that could add to its improvement.

One of the things that we have to realize here is that we are on the verge of a crisis within our aging population. All metrics, all demographics point to a scenario where we will not be able to afford to get old. That has a lot to do with some of the federal programs that are ongoing. We're talking about cuts to CPP, one of the most fundamental aspects of the framework of our country, our Canada pension plan, a scheme devised by New Democrats, ultimately, that provided assurance that when you got to your later years in life you were going to be able to afford the basics. Other federal signals coming out are that they're going to want you to work longer—work more for less and have less at the end. That doesn't bode too well for the confidence of people in this province and ultimately in this country to be able to live in a decent and respectful way.

We're talking about making this thing better because, ultimately, Madam Speaker, seniors built the very country and the very province that we stand on today. We owe it to them to ensure that, if their health degrades to the point their home is no longer accessible to them and no longer accommodates them, the province should and can—it can—do enough to help them live out their lives in the comfort of their own homes.

I'm proud to stand in support of the intent of this bill because it is something that I certainly, if I was on the government side, would support: the whole idea of ensuring that seniors could age with the respect that they deserve. But I would go a whole lot further in ensuring that we made those provisions that their homes were safe and comfortable, again, because we owe it to them. We can afford it.

I also believe that the provisions in terms of stimulative measures can work as well. I'm a little bit of a Keynesian follower, supporter, in terms of economic ideology. I understand the idea that the government can spend some money and actually stimulate more money in terms of revenue.

I also understand that a tax cut, in terms of revenue coming in—if we cut tax rates, that is an expenditure, when we forgo those revenues. That's rarely a point that's made here. We always see tax cuts as simply tax cuts. No; those are expenditures, ultimately. If we're going to go further down that road than we have, then we're going to have less resources to be able to work through the context of these bills and to provide some mechanisms for folks to live in decency and security, one of the reasons why we were so proud to have some of our other ideas adopted, some of our great ideas adopted that actually put the pause on those corporate tax expendi-

tures. You call them tax cuts; we call them expenditures. The government took that and adopted that as a part of their budget, and we're happy that they did.

Also, we understand that there are those in the province who have made it through these hard economic times relatively unscathed and potentially could afford to support the wonderful services we have in this province like our roads, like our schools, like our hospitals—all those systems that members of the official opposition labelled as socialist just moments ago: socialist amendments, socialist roads, socialist sewers, socialist water. Absolutely—and you drink a lot of it every day. Sometimes you flush it down the toilet, it's treated and it's put into lakes. If that's socialism, then we're all better off for it.

Madam Speaker, I think you can tell that our party certainly is supportive of the intent, as I am as an individual member, but it would be supportive of the measure to actually have a larger catchment in terms of folks that were supported by this type of bill. We know it's necessary and we know that it's only going to get more necessary as we go along. It's something that I hope we can implement quickly, and I hope we can have a lot of buy-in from those seniors that understand that. It's a half-measure. It is a stopgap. It doesn't go all the way.

As we've seen with many other bills from the government side, the intent is there, but the full mechanics and going the distance on bills that would actually solve problems are rarely evident. That's maybe what our job is: to point out some of the inadequacies in bills that could make them better and hopefully they'd be adopted, as we have seen from time to time in this House.

Madam Speaker, I'll end my comments there. As always, I'm honoured to speak in this House, and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 39, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Energy. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

1800

For those of you who wish to leave the chamber before we start, I'd like to invite you to do that now so the member can speak without the added distraction.

The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. As you've noted, I requested this late show debate because of my dissatisfaction with the answer to my question given by the Minister of Energy and subsequently an answer shared by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

I actually asked the question of the Premier concerning this government's assigning of the land lease payments from crown land administered by the Ontario Realty Corp. at South Cayuga in Haldimand county—payments that are in the process apparently of being made to Six Nations.

Quite frankly, I note from the outset that my dissatisfaction results from the fact of the minister failing to even attempt to address my questions with regard to the government's involvement in the recently announced Samsung-Six Nations deal that will see government money laundered through the Ontario Realty Corp. and through Samsung and assigned to Six Nations, allegedly as a buyoff against a future protest against wind turbines.

Specifically I asked: "Is the government involved in the agreement or not? Is this about handing over lease money to Six Nations or handing over crown land, all the while sticking Haldimand county with wind towers and property devaluations?.... Why has this land-lease precedent been set?" Again, no attempt was made to answer any of the questions.

I think it should be recognized that as the elected representative for Haldimand–Norfolk, these aren't just my questions; these are questions being asked across Haldimand county. When ministers ignore me, they are ignoring the people I represent. I find that unacceptable.

You see, Speaker, apparently the minister is willing to address the subject with others, as he was quoted in the media stating that "the agreement had nothing to do with the government." However, that statement seems to fly in the face of published quotes from elected Six Nations Chief Bill Montour, who noted in the Teka newspaper, the Tekawennake, that, "A letter from the Minister of Infrastructure states that the lease from the land surface will be turned over to Six Nations." Chief Montour goes on to characterize this as "unprecedented," adding that, "They have always maintained that we have no right to that land."

I asked the McGuinty government: Share this letter. Given that the chief feels it's precedent-setting, given the last six years of land dispute impacts, I would think something as important as this must be discussed with the people that it impacts. Just as it was with the original, secret, backroom \$7-billion Samsung deal with the Ontario government, so too with the most recent deal: The people in Ontario, and particularly those in my riding, are kept in the dark.

Six years after the land dispute began at Douglas Creek Estates in Caledonia, the scars of mayhem remain: a burned-out tractor-trailer; the blocking of home building, commercial and industrial development; and a continuing seeding of division within the community. A once-promising subdivision, Douglas Creek Estates, now features warrior flags, a hydro tower barricade and

occupiers. Of course, it was just as recent as this morning that Mr. McGuinty called the situation that I just described as an “alleged occupation.” I do ask the Premier to talk to someone like Sam Gualtieri, who was almost beaten to within an inch of his life. A statement like that is an insult to the Gualtieri family.

Nearby, yet-to-be-wired hydro towers stand untouched—they’ve been there for six years, stalling transmission from Niagara—that cost the Ontario government \$100 million. After six years, people are understandably nervous, skeptical and untrusting of the McGuinty government’s mishandling of any situation to do with either land disputes or the transmission of electricity.

The concern grows again. With the stroke of a pen, we saw the handover of Ipperwash Provincial Park, the handover of the 360-acre Burch correctional property, again with zero public consultation. Now we hear the infrastructure minister has written a letter indicating that land-lease monies from properties within Haldimand county will be laundered through Samsung to Six Nations. Speaker, this adds insult to injury for people in my area. And the questions remain. Where is the letter? We wish to see that letter that said that these land-lease payments have been signed over to Six Nations.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Earlier today, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk asked a question to the Premier with regard to assigning land-lease payments from crown lands at South Cayuga to Six Nations. I want to start off with a few quotes, Madam Speaker, from the Six Nations, which may put things in a better perspective for my honourable colleagues in this House.

A statement by Chief Bill Montour of Six Nations: “This agreement is a historic accomplishment for Six Nations as it demonstrates the success that can be achieved with Six Nations as a partner. The Grand [River] Renewable Energy Park is a template for how Six Nations can finally begin to realize benefits from the ongoing development within the Haldimand tract; the fact that the development itself is clean and sustainable simply adds to the overall attractiveness of the project.”

With regard to Samsung projects with Six Nations, our government has an agreement with Samsung, which is a landmark agreement, that is creating jobs and bringing investments to our province of Ontario. We are pleased with the progress that Samsung and the Six Nations elected council have made with respect to the Grand Renewable Energy Project. Samsung is comfortable investing in the Grand Renewable Energy agreement, creating Canadian jobs in the process of this investment.

Samsung has been consulting with various aboriginal communities, including Six Nations, for a number of years about this renewable energy project and the proposed land lease. Recently, Madam Speaker, it was the subject of 10 public hearings on the matter.

We are not worried about service interruptions in the area. There are sufficient transmission lines to support the project’s needs. The Grand Renewable Energy Project is predicted to generate \$55 million for the Six Nations groups over the next 20 years.

Samsung and partners worked together in a comprehensive community consultation process with Six Nations people to ensure their feedback was taken into consideration. K.J. Kim, vice-president of Samsung, made a statement saying: “Samsung, together with our development partner Pattern, welcomes the decision by the elected council of Six Nations to join with us in building a world-class wind and solar farm in Haldimand county. After almost two years of negotiations with Six Nations, we are proud to have reached an agreement for the first renewable energy partnership in Six Nations’ history.”

Mr. Michael Garland, the CEO of Pattern, made this comment: “Having engaged in a comprehensive community consultation process with the Six Nations people, Pattern and Samsung would like to recognize the efforts of Chief Montour, his colleagues on council, and staff who have taken a historic step forward.”

Samsung, through its \$7-billion investment in our province of Ontario, plan to bring in 16,000 jobs—manufacturing jobs and additional construction, installation, maintenance, engineering, operation, steel-making, financial services, facilities management and other jobs—to this province.

They’re building four new manufacturing facilities in Ontario. In Tillsonburg, they are manufacturing blades for wind turbines, where they are creating 900 jobs. In Windsor, they are building towers for wind power, with 700 jobs created. In Don Mills, for the solar inverters project and the factory, they are creating 200 jobs. In London, for a solar panel manufacturing plant, they are creating 200 jobs. These are the jobs which are created just by Samsung projects.

The land-lease issue which has been raised: Infrastructure Ontario and Samsung have been in discussion—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I’d ask you to wrap up because you have exceeded the five minutes.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Infrastructure Ontario and Samsung have been in discussion on the potential lease of lands to enable the Grand Renewable Energy Park for the past year. At this time, no final decisions have been made. Any potential land lease to Samsung, if approved, will be on standard government terms at market rates.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1812.

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 6 June 2012

Mercredi 6 juin 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 June 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 juin 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WIRELESS SERVICES AGREEMENTS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LES CONVENTIONS DE SERVICES SANS FIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 5, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / *Projet de loi 82, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Before I start, I would like unanimous consent to stand down our lead.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Trinity-Spadina has asked for unanimous consent to stand down the lead. Is it agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much, Speaker and members.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You owe me, Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was going to do my speech anyway.

Speaker, I just want to thank everybody for joining in this political forum, political channel. We are on live. It's 9:05 in the morning and it's June 6 on a Wednesday morning. It's good to have an opportunity to speak to this bill. It's rare that members of the opposition speak to a bill where we say it's a good bill. There are other elements that could be added to the bill, but it is a good bill that even—even—Tories and even New Democrats are going to, I suspect, support because it's a good thing.

It's a timely thing as well. G82 is a bill that enacts a new act to govern wireless agreements. When you look at some of these statistics, you realize why the government had to do something. Over 22.5 million Canadians subscribe to wireless services and 77% of Ontarians sub-

scribe to cellphone services; it's a whole lot of people. The Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services reports that complaints about wireless carriers comprised 52% of the complaints it received in 2009-10, the period they were monitoring. Seventy-five percent of the complaints about post-paid wireless services received by the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services for 2009 fell within the following categories: billing errors, termination disputes, customer service grievances, and terms and conditions changes.

Cellular phone services is the business category for which the Better Business Bureau in Canada has processed the most complaints this year, and complaints about cellphones and long-distance charges consistently appear on the Ministry of Consumer Services's annual list of top 10 consumer complaints.

When you look at this history, is it any wonder that we have a bill here, introduced by the former member from Sault Ste. Marie, to give him credit—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Former member? He's still the member.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Did I say "former"?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: From the member from Sault Ste. Marie, to give him credit, and later taken up by—

Mr. John Yakabuski: That was pointed out to you by the former member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Who is still here.

Is it any wonder that the government finally took it on and made the bill its own?

We think it's a good thing, because customers of these kinds of services are left on their own. When they have a grievance, they are on their own trying to solve the problem, which is very difficult in a market that's controlled by four major companies, now five. When you're up against these big guys, mostly, I suspect, the legal costs to defend yourself are incredibly high. The little guy is going to have to do that on his own: call the company, complain, spend hours trying to resolve a problem that generally never gets resolved because there's never anyone to go to to solve it quickly.

It reminds me of the bill that I'm trying to introduce on condominium owner protection. It's a similar kind of problem, because when people have a complaint, like condominium owners, like people who own wireless or cellular phones, unless you have a place where you can go and quickly resolve a dispute, you've got to go to court—and nobody goes to court. We know this. For four years I've been trying to do the same thing on condo-

miniums. People who buy into a condominium have a contract they've got to read called declarations, most of which are incomprehensible to the ordinary homo sapiens that cannot read those agreements, legal agreements which are intended to confuse and make it so that people do not read them. It is deliberately done in such a way that the unsuspecting buyer, whether it's of a cellular phone or a condominium, doesn't know what to do and will not read those contracts until it becomes a problem. Same problemo, condo owner—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Cellphones used to be the same size as condominiums.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right, right. The Speaker is already up. You see what you're doing?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd just like to remind the member as he sits down that the conversation doesn't go between you two. It goes through the Chair. So could you fix that up for us? Thank you very much.

0910

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you very much. We don't need additional help from the other people in the chairs. Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There used to be a time, through you, Speaker, when we had some flexibility in this place, a little give-and-take, which made this place a little more exciting to be in as opposed to this soldier-like quality that is now instilled by some Speakers that force us—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would suggest that the Hollywood production stop. I think criticizing the Chair is not a good thing to do and could be a big error on your part. I suggest you withdraw that last comment.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I withdraw the comment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There was a time. How things change in this place. You do what you can. What else can you do? I'd like to have a little fun in this place. I do, and so do many other people in this place when they are in this place, debating.

When you look at these contracts, these wireless agreements, they are deliberately complex. It is intended that people do not read them, and they do not, by and large, read them until they're faced with a problem, and then they realize, "My God." You try to resolve it, and usually it doesn't work. So having a bill where the supplier is required to disclose information to a consumer under this act in a way that is clear, comprehensive and prominent, and it will have to deliver the information in a way that is clear to the consumer, is a good thing. It's what we expect of any company dealing with any consumer around any particular service: that the agreements are clear, comprehensive and prominent, meaning people actually see them and are able to read them in a way that isn't hard.

Further, when the information on pricing is provided in the advertising of the services, the supplier has to

advertise the all-inclusive price for the service before the HST, and this all-inclusive cost has to be the most prominent cost into the advertising. What could be wrong with that? It's so obvious. You would think they ought to have done that ages ago—but didn't. It's before us now and it's good.

The supplier has to ensure that the agreement is in writing and that it discloses the name of the consumer, the name and contact information of the supplier, the date of the agreement, term of agreement, expiry date of agreement, a description that itemizes each service, a statement indicating whether any of the goods provided within the agreement are subject to any technological or physical features that restrict their functioning, the terms and methods of payments, the total amount paid by the consumer before entering into the agreement, the minimum amount payable by the consumer for each billing period, the manner of calculating the amounts that the consumer is required to pay to the supplier if the consumer cancels the agreement. It's good.

It's what we expect governments to do: to protect the consumer. It's what we expect the government to do when we're dealing with 1.3 million condominium owners who face the same problem and do not have the same consumer protection. It's the same thing. Finally, we have a bill that deals with consumer protection for wireless agreements but we do not have the same deal, the same agreement, a similar kind of bill, that protects 1.3 million condominium owners who have no consumer protection at all. There is a measure here that says, "If the consumer cancels a wireless agreement" in compliance with this act and the supplier demands payment, "the consumer may commence an action in the Superior Court of Justice...." I thought, when I saw this, "Hmm, how does someone take these big guys to court?" I thought, "This is an enabling piece of legislation, though where there is a disagreement, a consumer can go to court." But you've got to understand, when you've got a big guy with billions of dollars versus a little guy earning \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000 taking them to the Supreme Court—"Who's going to win?" I thought to myself, on the one hand.

On the other, it says that "the court may order exemplary or punitive damages or whatever other relief that the court considers proper" should the individual take it to court—which is good, because it's a way of obviously undermining, potentially, the fact that those who have big loads of money could lose a few dollars in the process of that legal fight. But it still requires people to actually take them to court. But we've got an uneven playing field between the little guy, who earns so little, and these big wireless companies, cellular companies, that earn in the billions of dollars by way of their company profits, and I'm not sure whether or not people eventually, if there's a disagreement, are going to go to court. It allows for people to be able to defend themselves, which is better than nothing, and the penalties are a little bit higher than they used to be, where, if a corporation is convicted under this act, it "is liable to a fine of not more than

\$250,000.” Is that a deterrent? I don’t know. But it’s bigger than before in terms of the penalty. I’m not sure whether for billionaires \$250,000 is that much of a deterrent, but God bless, it’s better than nothing. And the demand that these contracts become “clear, comprehensive and prominent” is a good thing.

So yes, I have to say to the government that when Canadian consumers pay the highest minimum monthly charge for cellphone services out of the 11 countries that were studied, it’s about time that you did this. It’s important that the government learns to respond to other similar problems that other consumers face in society. That is why I made reference to condominium owners who are not getting the same protection, for whom I have fought for four years, introducing bills in this Legislature that I am persuaded the government is listening to, but not by much. Because they haven’t moved one single inch in protecting condo owners, those consumers, from bad developers in particular. They deserve, in my mind, the same respect. While some of you are discussing this in your caucus debates, I’m not sure whether my bill is ever going to make it to third reading debate, let alone consideration by the government. I’m hoping that we’re going to get hearings on that bill, but who knows? But at least this bill appears to move forward, because it has the support of the government and the other opposition party, so I say, God bless.

Mr. Speaker, I think I’ve said enough on the bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I’m pleased to speak on Bill 82. I fully agree with the member from Trinity–Spadina that it’s a good bill. I was at a community event this past weekend in my riding, and I met lots of constituents who expressed their happiness, that it is good that the government has taken action and we have introduced Bill 82, because it deals with cellphone agreements. It will help cellphone agreements and contracts to be more fair, and the agreements will be, if this bill is passed, in more clear, plain, easy-to-understand language. At the same time this bill helps to reduce costs, cap cancellation fees, prevent automatic renewals etc.

I really appreciate members’ sincere comments that it is a good bill. The people, my constituents, were telling me that they cannot understand why this will not have all-party support and be passed quickly. Thank you.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Oxford.

Interjection: Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: We look a lot alike; what can I say? Anyway, I think he’s actually younger than I am, but he’s a very, very prominent person.

Anyway, the member from Trinity–Spadina, I believe, usually brings a fair amount of enthusiasm to the discussion. I know, Speaker, that perhaps his style is, as you say, often theatrical, but the content is definitely there.

I think if I look at the work that David Oraziatti has done on this bill, Mr. Oraziatti’s intent here—Minister Best was kind enough to recognize that—I commend him for doing that.

Now the deal is, I’ve really never heard too many complaints about this, to be honest. The only one I’ve heard is when—I had a couple, a retired couple, I gather, and they were in Florida for a month. They were phoning home every day and maybe getting calls from home about things going on in the neighbourhood etc., from their family. When they got home, they got this huge roaming charge. They were quite shocked; I think it was like two grand or something.

Now, in my role—and I’m sure any MPP would take the occasion to bring it to the attention of the minister. But it is a contract, and there’s a reciprocal responsibility when you sign a contract, even though what I like about this part is to have the plain-language provision in the legislation. That’s important because a lot of these contracts are drawn up and it’s in fine print and you assume it’s a trustworthy agreement. I think openness, transparency and accountability are important in a contract, in a relationship. But even when I look at some of the young people today, they’re on the phone all the time. Do you understand? I walk up from the GO Train often and I see them looking at their phones.

I think it’s a consumer protection issue and I believe it’s the right thing to do, to have full, open disclosure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I’m pleased to stand this morning, as always, on behalf of the good folks of Davenport and speak to this bill, Bill 82. I also believe that I can support this, and our party will be supporting this, because this is a step in the right direction in terms of consumer protection and fairness.

You know, most of us don’t have too many choices about where we go, and our cellphone use is pretty much compulsory at this point. It’s just a part of everyday life in this city. Too many people are gouged because they haven’t read the fine print. They don’t understand the fine print. So I think putting contracts into plain language is really important. I know that in the riding of Davenport there are many people for whom English is not their first language and who suffer, whether it’s through wireless service agreements or through folks who are trying to sell fraudulent heating systems or furnaces. I think we need to level the playing field here.

So I would support this absolutely. I think there are other steps that we need to take. As my friend from Trinity–Spadina was saying, trying to make this a level playing field when it comes to holding condo developers accountable, too—this is another place where we’d like to move forward, where people in Davenport definitely need the support of government on their side to make sure that they’re not the victims of predatory developers or corporations.

The issue of, as our friend from Durham was saying, the roaming charges is something I’ve heard constantly,

where people rack up hundreds and hundreds of dollars in fees that they had no idea they were accumulating, and I'd like to make sure that this bill includes language that would enforce that, so that people know that if they're travelling abroad, they might suffer from roaming charges. I hope that we can tighten that up as well. But generally I support this bill. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Just before I get a chance to make some comments on the remarks from the member for Trinity-Spadina, I think all of us would recognize that there are commemorative services all across Canada today. It's the 68th anniversary of the invasion in Normandy. Elements of the Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Navy and Royal Canadian Air Force stormed Juno Beach, part of one of the greatest military battles in the history of mankind. I know all of us want to remember, because we're here today because of their brave sacrifices.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to visit with my good friend Sammy Kershaw, who operates the Bell Mobility store on Lansdowne Street West in Peterborough. We've had some discussions about various contracts with cellphones etc. I want to blend that into what the member from Trinity-Spadina said today. He's always long been a consumer advocate here in the province of Ontario, and his support, along with the opposition's, as we get to committee will give us the opportunity to all come together in a unified fashion to produce a consumer affairs bill to protect cellphone contracts, which I think is so important for the people of Peterborough and Ontario today. I want to get in the good folks at home this morning. Many of them have cellphones and they're looking to us for leadership on this particular file, to strengthen those contracts, to strengthen accountability and to make sure that when they enter into a contract, they know all the terms and conditions of that contract, to make sure that indeed they're protected.

As I said, the work of the member for Trinity-Spadina, the work of the member for Sault Ste. Marie, the work of the Minister of Consumer Affairs and indeed the work of my good friend from Prince Edward-Hastings—all of us coming together can make this a really strong consumer protection bill. We all know, whether you've been in municipal politics or here at the Legislature, you constantly get inquiries about organizations ripping off consumers. We can halt that here today with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Trinity-Spadina has two minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I thank the members for their comments. I know the member from Durham said he hasn't received too many complaints, but I think people have, and that's why I began with a history and talked about the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services, which reports that complaints about wireless carriers comprise 52% of all the complaints. This is huge. It's not as if we're not hearing about

it. They are hearing about it, and we are too. That's why I wanted to give that bit of history.

I do agree with the members from Durham and Davenport, where they talked about roaming charges. That is one of the issues I wanted to touch upon, and this is where I think we can, in committee, add that additional element that has been left out of this bill, because roaming charges are yet another big problem that people complain about, and the government has left that out. That will give us an opportunity, as the member from Peterborough said, to come together, all three political parties. I think we could have come together if you had included it in the original draft, but we can still come together when we get together in committee, to deal with the roaming charges in particular.

To the member from Mississauga South, when she says people in her riding cannot understand why there is no three-party support—I think we have three-party support and I think all other amendments are possible. But I also say to the member from Mississauga South that the people in my riding in condominiums are saying the same thing to you and to your party when we talk about people not being able to understand why the Liberal caucus in particular doesn't support consumer amendments to the condo act that would make their life a little bit easier, and they have been waiting for a long, long time. So I'm urging the member from Mississauga South to take that into account as well. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to speak on Bill 82. First of all, I would like to thank my colleague the Minister of Consumer Services for bringing this bill forward. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, wireless services are an \$18-billion industry that pervades all of our lives. With the advancements in technology, this world has become flat. This world is changing every moment, and this change is impacting all of us. This change has also made us dependent on wireless services. If we look around, in every walk of life we have become dependent on iPhones, iPads, tablets, BlackBerrys. If we do not get connected to our BlackBerrys for, say, 10 or 15 minutes, we feel like we have lost something.

0930

I would also like to share with the House that this bill has a lot of independent support as well. As I said earlier, this past weekend I was at a community event in my riding. I met lots of my constituents who were very happy that our government has introduced Bill 82. In the past, they have expressed their concerns about cellphone contracts. Many have said they are in very fine print; it's hard to read and it's hard to understand. Some have said that the terms of the contracts are so complex that you need legal counsel to interpret them. So they were all very happy that our government has taken action.

This is a pocketbook issue. Consumers want our government to address this. This bill contains measures that will help reduce costs, cap cancellation fees, prevent automatic renewals and make cellphone contracts sim-

pler, in plain language, easy and clear language, which will be very helpful for consumers to understand.

Today I would like to speak to the benefits of this proposed legislation. When we look at the provisions in this bill, the benefits to Ontario consumers are enormous and they are very clear as well. If passed, this bill will allow customers to cancel their agreements at any time and with modest cancellation fees. Four other provinces—Quebec, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia—have introduced similar provisions. With a consistent approach across provinces, we can facilitate greater industry compliance, ultimately benefiting the consumer.

Companies will be required to clearly disclose which services are included and the minimum cost of an agreement, as well as the added costs that would be charged when additional services are used. The terms must be clear, comprehensible and prominent, and they must include specific information on roaming charges and cellphone logs.

The bill also requires companies to have agreements that use clear language, as I said earlier, with full disclosure so consumers understand what they are getting into and what they are agreeing to. This level of disclosure is essential for consumer protection. Customers must understand what they are getting before and after making any agreement.

Companies will need to get a customer's express consent before renewing, extending or amending a fixed-term contract. Contracts will no longer be renewed automatically, without the customer's consent. When we look at today's market, we find that simply asking for a change to an agreement can result in the agreement being extended or renewed. The bill says that agreeing to a change in service is not the same as agreeing to an automatic extension or renewal. The customer must be asked if they want to renew and the customer must say yes before this takes place.

We are aiming to reduce cell shock by enforcing all-inclusive price advertising, requiring providers to advertise with the total of all costs and fees disclosed most prominently in any price advertising. If the all-in price is advertised, there can be no surprises when the bill arrives.

This legislation, if passed, will result in strong, enforceable remedies, making it an offence for wireless services providers to charge for payments they are not entitled to. If a service provider owes a refund to a customer, the customer has the right to sue the provider to recover the amount owed to them, and they will have the right to claim three times the amount of a refund that is owed. If this bill is passed, it will offer some of the strictest penalties of all the Canadian provinces.

The proposed legislation also prohibits billing for services that a customer cannot use. If a wireless device is not working and is still under warranty, the provider cannot charge for services a customer cannot use because the device is being repaired, nor can they charge for a loaner if one is provided.

Many consumers object to paying extra for services they did not know would cost them extra if used. The proposed law requires wireless companies to have a system in place to notify customers when they are close to their user limits, so that the customer is aware that further use may result in additional costs. And they must disclose these cost details to the customer before any agreement is signed.

If the bill is passed, implementation of this legislation will include a strategic enforcement approach and a proactive communications plan to ensure that consumers are fully aware of the changes and their rights. If this bill becomes law, Mr. Speaker, it will take effect a full six months after royal assent. The six-month implementation period will give companies enough time to prepare their systems to comply with the new law.

When it comes into force, the new act will apply to all new agreements. It will also apply to all service contract transactions, like renewals, that may already be in progress. It will also apply to existing contracts that are changed after the date it comes into force.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that telecommunications is a federal responsibility, while consumer protection is a matter for the provinces. For this reason, the bill focuses exclusively on the consumer aspects of the industry. It focuses on the needs of Ontarians who are considering or who have already signed agreements for wireless cellphone services. The bill, if passed, is designed to protect consumers through clear disclosure requirements and cancellation rights.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Minister of Consumer Services has said that the government has consulted industry on the development of this bill, and the industry's message was clear: Any government action must be consistent with actions taken by other provinces. We have listened to the industry's message, and this bill has been aligned with similar initiatives in other provinces, to avoid a patchwork of regulations across the country.

We are taking steps, through this proposed legislation, to help consumers make informed choices when spending their hard-earned dollars. As I have mentioned, we are responding to consumer frustrations with contracts in this sector to help Ontario families. Families, when they sign cellphone contracts, would benefit from clear and easy-to-understand language in cellphone contracts. This would put the onus on businesses to make sure their customers know what services they are paying for.

0940

Ontario is also aligning with Quebec and Manitoba, who have taken action in this sector. General consistency across provinces will reduce the burden on industry and facilitate compliance in Ontario.

The legislation would ensure that before a contract is signed, the wireless service supplier has disclosed to the consumer whether a phone or other device is locked and only usable with respect to a particular supplier, and, if so, how long it is locked for and whether the lock will be removed at the end of the contract, and at what price.

Bill 82 would help people understand what they are receiving in their wireless services agreement. Agreements would need to clearly explain what services are provided, what services would result in added cost for the customer, how services can be assessed, and rates and restrictions; for example, if a long-distance plan is within the province of Ontario or within the country of Canada or throughout America.

If a phone is provided free or at a discount, the contract would need to include its retail value and the actual cost to the consumer.

Information on how cancellation fees are calculated would need to be included in the agreement.

It is encouraging to see the CRTC is considering taking active steps to explore their role in the wireless sector by stating their intent to hold consultations on the state of wireless competition in Canada. But the CRTC can be slow. We at the provincial level are taking action. We are on the front lines of consumer protection. Ontarians come to us with their complaints and inquiries, and we know that cellphone contracts are a huge issue for many consumers.

There's a lot of independent support for this bill, as I have said earlier. Michael Janigan is the executive director and general counsel for the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, whose background and experience is one of supporting consumers on many issues. He stated, "This bill will help remove barriers to real competition for the ordinary consumers of wireless services," and, he said, "It will help level the playing field for customers who currently feel trapped by ... one-sided conditions."

Mel Fruitman, who is the vice-president of the Consumers' Association of Canada, stated, "For a long time consumers have been victims of the nefarious marketing practices of wireless telephone companies. This protection for consumers is necessary and long overdue. We can see no reason why this act would not receive all-party support and be quickly passed."

I will be supporting this bill at second reading because this bill contains strong measures that will protect consumers and their families. I know the constituents in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South and consumers all across Ontario will also support our government's measures as proposed in this important piece of legislation. We are involving consumers by ensuring that they get the information they need to make informed decisions. This information will help consumers to better understand their mobile and cellphone contracts and get the contract they agree to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in debate today. Of course, we all recognize the need for consumer protection in Ontario, particularly as it relates to cellphone bills and for those folks that have been gouged. We in the official opposition do find it passing strange, however, that the Minister of Consumer Services, Margaret Best, decided to steal the thunder of the member from Sault Ste. Marie, Mr. Oraziotti, who has

had quite a strong legislative track record. I think the minister was quite envious.

We also find the timing to be considerably awkward, given the fact that the CRTC, just five days before Margaret Best decided to steal Mr. Oraziotti's thunder, decided to look into this. I believe they have announced consultations in preparation for creating a national regulation with major providers; and many of those major providers, I might add, are on board with that particular legislation. But it also, I think, speaks to this motivation.

As I mentioned, the member from Sault Ste. Marie had put forward a bill, Bill 5. He had put forward this bill previously as well. It's in committee. Instead, what this bill will do is kill his bill. As I stated, this non-government member in the Liberal government has put forward a number of pieces of legislation in the past, and they were quite able to amend his legislation and give him the credit. But I think his strong track record in making legislation pass this House, with the exception of what the Minister of Consumer Services has in the past, was the reason for him losing his bill. So I have profound regret on behalf of that member and for that member that the minister would behave this way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I am also happy to stand on behalf of Hamilton Mountain residents this morning to speak about this important bill that's before us, because consumer protection is quite important. We know that many times consumers' children, who are probably among the top users of cellphones these days—seniors are using cellphones; people who are learning our languages are using cellphones. It states here that 77% of Ontarians are using cellphones. Many folks don't even have home phones in their residence anymore. They're counting on cellphone providers to give them a good service and a service that they can trust in. Hopefully, we'll be able to make sure that this bill becomes law in protecting consumers.

We definitely see every day the young folks, kids, teenagers who are running around with cellphones in their ears. When parents don't know what kind of contract that they're signing and then they see a bill at the end of the month that's hundreds of dollars for a use that they believed would suit their child's needs, that is something that most families can't afford. Like I said, you can't have one kid having a cellphone and not the other these days. It's become like the Nike shoes of the past—and worse.

Again, consumers aren't reading the big, long contracts. Making sure that we have clear contracts that put the consumer first, that know what the consumers are buying into, is definitely important. I will be supporting this bill and look forward to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm pleased to hear that the members are supporting Bill 82. I think the member from

Sault Ste. Marie should be congratulated, Speaker, for bringing this to the attention of the House.

It's one of those issues that, again, is affecting all of our people, I would say. I don't have to tell you, Speaker, that technology is changing as we speak. Therefore, anything that we can do to improve clarity, that can improve consumer protection and save them money at the same time, I think is a good thing. I hope that this bill goes to second reading so we can have further hearings on this as it travels, because there are still other areas to be looked at to make it even stronger. I don't think the bill goes far enough. I think there are other areas we should be looking at.

0950

I can look at my own bills, Mr. Speaker, and I have to tell you that when your own BlackBerry or whatever you use—I have no idea why companies have to repeat their message three or four times before it is erased. That is stealing time and stealing money from the pockets of our people.

If there is a contract, the contract should stipulate very clearly the facts, the terms of the contract, the limits and limitations. I think the bill clarifies all of that. We should give our consumers every opportunity to save money. There are people using it a lot and they pay a lot of money, and they could be saving a lot of money. It's incumbent upon us to do the right thing, bring it to the attention of the public. It's important that we, as legislators, look into it for the benefit of our people.

I hope that Bill 82 will pass and move on to public hearings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakubuski: It's a pleasure to comment on the address by the member from Mississauga on Bill 82, the cellphone bill.

If there's somebody out there who could say they have never opened up a cellphone bill and reacted in some way angrily, even if in private, then I would say they've never actually opened up a cellphone bill. Nobody who's got a cellphone in this province doesn't shake their head sometimes and say, "What in the name of Sam Hill is going on here?"

I do commend the member for Sault Ste. Marie. This has been a pet peeve of his since he came here in 2003—I was elected at the same time—and he has been on the cellphone issue for that length of time.

This bill will do something to help. It's about disclosure and ensuring that there's some clarity and understandability to the cellphone bills. Is it going to reduce the costs of operating cellphones? It doesn't really touch on that. That's not an issue. You're not going to have fewer roaming charges and stuff like that; they're not delving into that side of the telecommunications industry.

But from the point of view of being able to, in some way, understand the bill a little better, it's a positive step. We'll have to see how it actually materializes, because so much of the legislation this government introduces turns out to be a toothless tiger at times. We're hoping this

actually does have some impact and that people have a better understanding of the cellphone bill they're getting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Mississauga–Brampton South has two minutes.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, this is a pocketbook issue and consumers want it to be addressed.

I appreciate the comments from the members opposite, but I differ from the member from Nepean–Carleton. She said that the minister has stolen the thunder from the member from Sault Ste. Marie. He deserves congratulations; he has done a lot of work. In life, we all know it's working together, it's teamwork, we work in unison. Actually, I'm proud of our strong caucus. I totally disagree with this.

This bill contains strong measures, as I said earlier. It will protect consumers and their families. This bill, if passed, will provide information to consumers that will help them better understand their mobile and wireless services contracts and get the contract they agree to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Renfrew—no?

Mr. John Yakubuski: No, I'm just leaving.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much. It's great to speak this morning. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has lots of opportunities to speak. We don't need to hear him again.

It is great to be up here today to speak to Bill 82. My colleague the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, in eastern Ontario, did a great job yesterday outlining this meticulous bill and detailing some of the problems that do exist in the bill from a logistics point of view.

I think those who are talking about the fact that it's going to result in smaller cellphone bills—it's a bit of a myth. This bill isn't going to do that. This bill is going to make it a bit clearer for people to understand their bills, but I do worry sometimes about red tape—increasing red tape and increasing legislation. I know in Manitoba, when they brought in a bill similar to this—you know, a cellphone contract sometimes looks like this, right? You open it up and it's got all this small print on it and you can read it a long time. Government legislation often looks like this. This is from Mike Harris here, my friend. That's going to make it simpler? Creating legislation? I don't know if that's necessarily the answer in this case.

But my colleague who spoke yesterday was the lead on this for consumer services. He's Tim Hudak's critic. He's an engineer. He's got years of experience in this field. He's uniquely qualified among members of the House to speak on this issue as he worked with Bell Canada for many, many years. He suggested yesterday that we call this the "me too" bill. I don't know if he's too far off the mark in calling it the "me too" bill. That's not meant to denigrate the member from Sault Ste. Marie, who in the last session and earlier in the previous session, as well as the act alluded to in 2003, when he was

elected—this has been his pet project: to bring in legislation to create some reform in the wireless telecommunications industry in this province, where obviously there is an issue. But again I go back to the fact that I don't know if this legislation, as it stands right now, is the be-all, end-all answer to the problems that exist. I don't know if it's going to do what is necessary to make your cellphone bills smaller in the province, which is what we've heard a lot about in the discussions so far this morning from different members of the House—roaming charges and information packages that cost so much money.

With two young daughters in my house that are nine and 11 years old, there's a couple of different smart phones and there's a cellphone sitting around there as well. My daughter gets on my BlackBerry and starts to download her Katy Perry video or her Lady Gaga video or Taylor Swift or whoever it might be today. That's going to end up still costing you money—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We know it's you. We know it's you, Smitty.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm not downloading the Lady Gaga; Taylor Swift, she's okay. I don't mind Taylor Swift.

Anyway, this government continually plays games with policies like this; that's what this government does. So, you know, they're taking advantage of the headlines. It was no coincidence, I don't think, that the week after the CBC did a major news story on cell shock with data plans and those types of things that the government decided, "Hey, this is the perfect opportunity to bring in this bill that Mr. Orazietti has had on the table for eight years now." So they're taking advantage of the situation—

Mr. Jeff Leal: I thought the Conservatives didn't watch the CBC.

Mr. Todd Smith: Once in a while I watch the CBC, Mr. Leal.

None of this, I don't think, is particularly shocking to people who have been watching the goings-on here at Queen's Park for the last eight or nine years. We've talked about the fact that a lot of the bills are made for headlines. They're made to give the illusion that the government is actually working on behalf of the people of Ontario to create meaningful legislation, when really what it's being created for is to create a few positive headlines and make it seem like they're doing work.

As my colleague pointed out yesterday, in addition to the CBC running that story, the CRTC had also presented notice that they're considering changes to the federal regulations in this regard. In addition to the public steps, the governments of Quebec and Manitoba have already introduced legislation on this subject. As I mentioned, the Manitoba legislation is pretty, pretty thick.

So once again it's a government that seems to enjoy leading from the back of the pack. It's the "me too" bill. Hard to think of something that the current government enjoys doing more than giving itself the opportunity to poke other jurisdictions in the eye, whether it's Alberta over the oil sands, or they continually like to poke our

friends in Ottawa in the eye as well, our federal government.

I know that there are those who ask why we should care about why a bill is being brought forward and whether or not that should matter to this debate, but it does matter. It matters because it's symbolic of a larger problem. It's a bill to address the headline once again. We're stuck with this bill after the headline is gone, so we've got to make sure that this is a good bill. My colleague yesterday referred to this as a distraction. That's exactly what it is. There are a lot of things that we should be talking about right now in this House—

1000

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Job creation.

Mr. Todd Smith: Job creation; the economy, which is going down the toilet; a huge, huge debt; deficit—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: What about the horse racing industry?

Mr. Todd Smith: My friend from Nepean—Carleton wants to talk about the horse racing industry; good call as well. How about the Ornge scandal? The government said that they would give us a select committee on the Ornge scandal. The health minister said that herself many, many times. There are so many other issues that mean a lot to people: soaring hydro rates in the province of Ontario, seniors that can't live in their homes because they're paying—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would hope that the member would keep to the agenda. He seems to be drifting a bit and he seems to be having cross-dialogue with other members. Go through me, thanks.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a former referee as well, I do respect you, that you're in control of the situation here.

You know, this isn't to say that cell shock isn't a problem in Ontario. I just talked about a number of the red tape problems and all of the problems in the province of Ontario. Cell shock is also a problem—it is. We have ministers on the government side of the House who stand up during question period and pay lip service to reducing regulation for business, and then the next week the government brings in a bill like this that's going to increase regulation on the telecommunications industry.

The member from the Soo, in his initial remarks, acknowledged that this is a federal responsibility. He then proceeded to attack the federal regulator for being slow to act, which maybe is okay; they were a little slow to react. However, as I and the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry have pointed out, the CRTC launched a regulatory review of this very matter.

So the government knows that this is occurring right now in the nation's capital and it would create a blanket of regulations for the entire country, not this piecemeal, patchwork type of regulation. That's why it's very important, I think, going forward, that instead of creating our own legislation here in the province of Ontario that might be different from Manitoba or different from Quebec, we actually look at the Quebec legislation and

we make sure that our legislation matches up with what's happening in Quebec, because if you take Ontario and you take Quebec, you're taking a lot of the cellphone users and putting them under the same regulations, because let's face it, most of the population of the country is in Quebec and here in Ontario. Therefore, most of the cellphone users are in these two provinces.

We have to make sure that when we sit down at committee, which we're willing to do, we reduce the amount of red tape, because we all know that red tape only increases the cost of doing business. It just does; it's a fact. We have to adopt the same standards as Quebec, or very similar standards, so that we're not creating more red tape for the telecommunications industry. We've heard all of the members here in the House today talking about the fact that we're paying too much for our cellphone bills. What are we going to do if we create more red tape for the industry? We're going to cause the cellphone bills to increase. It's just a matter of fact. That's what's going to happen. So for every clause we deviate from the existing legislation in other provinces, we add another layer of red tape to this industry. So regardless of what the member from the Soo chooses to believe, this additional cost will be paid by the consumer. The cellphone user will end up paying. They always do. So our consumers may be able to make more informed choices but they may have to do so at a higher cost.

This particular bill has brought out the best anti-business tone in this Liberal government. We've heard how the big, bad telecom companies are seeking to take advantage of consumers and how without this bill consumers will be powerless against companies that have bullied the CRTC in order to get their way. That's from the Liberal backbench. During question period, of course, the Premier and his ministers come in and they thank these companies for doing more to keep this province economically afloat than this government has ever done.

There are things in this bill that are, as I said, commonsense solutions to consumer concerns. It's a desirable condition of a free market that the consumer be able to make decisions that are as informed as possible. We should want to protect consumers, and we do on this side of the House. We should want a healthy, viable, innovative and growing telecommunications sector in this province, and I believe that we do have that, although there are some bad things happening at RIM right now. We should want to reduce the red tape and regulatory burden, because it affects consumers as well as businesses.

As the PC critic for small business and red tape, I want regulation in this province that makes sense, and that's what our businesses want as well. Regulation for the sake of regulation or, worse yet, regulation for the sake of appearing decisive often leads to more laws and amendments later on. So what I think we'd like to see here and what we'd like to see addressed here is the best bill possible. More importantly, Ontario needs to stop unnecessarily picking fights with other levels of government, whether it's our fellow provinces in the west or the federal government in Ottawa.

There was a time when the province of Ontario took pride in having a leadership role in Confederation; there was a time when we didn't blame the other levels of government for problems in Ontario. But when you're staring down the face of the Ornge scandal and when you've been downgraded twice after your budget, you need a distraction. Again, I think that's where this bill comes in. It's a distraction from the problems that are currently faced here in Ontario. We're here talking about a telecommunications cell shock bill when we should be talking about the other issues I talked about three or four minutes ago.

I said yesterday that we had serious problems to face in this province, and we do. We have to address them like adults. We're not sent here to play childish name-calling games with other levels of government; we're sent here to make sure that we get the job done. We're sent here to make sure that our constituents are being represented well and getting the best government that we can possibly give them. So I ask my colleagues over on the government benches, why is it in our interest to demonize, rather than work with, the CRTC? That's kind of what's happening here. We're blaming the CRTC: "They haven't done anything; they're sitting on their cushy chairs in Ottawa." That's the rhetoric that I'm hearing from the other side, when really we should be working with the CRTC to ensure that we get the best possible bill that will cover the whole country of Canada.

Telecommunications law is, at the moment, in the jurisdiction of federal government, and the member from the Soo and the Minister of Consumer Services said the same last week when they brought in this bill, or at least began debate on it. Everyone who has spoken to the bill so far acknowledges that if we could or if we still can work with the other provinces and work with the CRTC to ensure one comprehensive national set of regulations to protect consumers, then why isn't that the very best option? Well, it goes back to the headlines again, because they want to get the good press now and make it seem like they're actually doing something here, when we know full well that not much has gotten done here over the last several years.

Ontario can make a substantive contribution to a national discussion here. Every member of this House likely has their smart phone bolted to their hip right now and it's vibrating away, or it's in their pockets. We know the Minister of the Environment doesn't have that problem. He's still using his Hilroy scrapbook to keep track of his messages.

Mr. Jeff Leal: He's doing a good job.

Mr. Todd Smith: He is doing a great job at keeping track of his messages, considering he doesn't use a smart phone. But these devices, for most of us here—for the other 105 of us—have changed the way that we communicate: Twitter, Facebook, BlackBerry Messenger, BBM, the emails that now exist at our fingertips 24 hours a day. It's something that would have seemed inconceivable, probably, when the Minister of the Environment arrived here, that we would all be communicating that way. He did just celebrate his 35th anniversary here

yesterday. Imagine that we would be living in this world right now where we're communicating instantly on cellphones on our hips—not the large cellphones. I remember when I was hired at Quinte Broadcasting, in the Belleville area, our news cruiser—we had a Jeep Cherokee, and the Jeep Cherokee had a cellphone in it that was this big. It sat in between the front seats in the cruiser. Imagine, you had to get out and carry it over your shoulder and go report on a crash on the 401 or whatever it might be. Now you can do it right on your hip. So it's quite amazing how technology has evolved—and it's going to continue to evolve. There's no way that we're ever going to stop progress; that's for sure. The smart phone is only going to play a more integral part in commerce and communications going forward.

That's why I brought in a private member's bill, which was supported by a member of the government side, a few weeks ago, and I look forward to making that legislation. It would help members of the real estate community complete real estate transactions by using electronic signatures. It just seemed like a common sense bill, and it's something that I'm happy that the member from Ottawa Centre is able to support as well, and hopefully the government side will support it.

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's coming. It's coming.

1010

Mr. Todd Smith: I like what I'm hearing from over there, that it's coming. That's good.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be offering cautious support to Bill 82. I know you were sitting on the edge of your seat waiting for that. We will be offering cautious support to Bill 82 at the second reading stage. I think there's an opportunity there to amend the bill and protect consumers without creating unnecessary red tape, as I described earlier, in this growing industry.

We hope that it continues to grow, and we believe it will. I've met with all of the telecommunication giants in this country, and they're doing all kinds of work across the country, adding to their systems to make sure that more and more people in rural parts of Ontario are able to access cellphone service, so that our businesses are able to access the wireless that is needed. But I know in eastern Ontario there is a huge project supported by the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, that's been supported by all levels of government, and it's making sure that all of the rural areas are able to access the same types of advantages that businesses here in the GTA and in the Ottawa area are able to access.

In order to make sure that we have a good bill—and it was described by the member from Trinity-Spadina as a good bill earlier; it could be a much better bill—we need to get it to the clause-by-clause stage at committee to make sure that this bill will have the impact that we want it to have to make life better for wireless users in Ontario.

We also need to have a serious discussion about how Ontario can best assume a leadership role in ensuring that there's a national standard that serves the best interests of consumers not just here in Ontario but across the country. I'd say that this is one area where leadership on the government benches has been most noticeably missing.

Anyone can pick a fight, Mr. Speaker, and it seems that it's the oldest political trick in the book: You pick an opponent, you paint them as a controlling or wealthy predatory person, and then paint yourself as the underdog, sticking up for the little guy. It's the classic political formula, and we've seen it too often. It's somewhat insulting to our voters.

Some issues, and this is one, are way too complicated to deal with on a black-and-white basis. The more we try and make this a simple issue, the greater the likelihood that we'll end up with a piece of legislation that isn't up to the task that it was drafted for. If that happens, those of us who are lucky enough to return to this House will be back here in a couple of years, or five years, and we'll be debating a package of amendments to this bill to try and change it, well after it has caused damage either to consumers or to the industry that we ignored right now.

So we need to sit down and we need to listen to people like Bernard Lord of the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, the former Premier of New Brunswick, who got that province back to balanced budgets.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: He's a fine man.

Mr. Todd Smith: He's a fine man.

The CWTA has some concerns about this bill, and I've spoken at length with them about some of the issues, including one that involves the end of the contract. So in this bill, what happens is—you've got your cellphone, right? It's running on a three-year package. Maybe you're not opening your mail when it comes to you, and you don't realize that your three-year deal is about to come to an end. When your deal comes to an end and you haven't renewed that contract, that very next day, your cellphone is cancelled. So you wake up in the morning and you're not getting your talking notes from the Premier's office. Imagine what could go wrong.

This is something that does need to be addressed in committee, because if the contract just ends, what happens now, too, is that your phone number that you've had for 15 years goes into a pool and it's just gone, right? So you've got your business cards saying "member from Peterborough" on them, and then your cellphone number is gone. They've been distributed to thousands of people. So it's a serious issue that does need to be looked at in committee as well.

I think the one thing that this bill doesn't do—and again, the myth that surrounds this bill is that it's actually going to drive down the cost of cellphone usage in the province of Ontario. This bill isn't going to do that. This bill is going to make it clearer to understand the contract, right? We have to be careful that if we bring in unnecessary red tape and create more red tape and more cumbersome, burdensome things for the companies to deal with, then it is going to end up on the bills of consumers.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this on this beautiful Wednesday morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the individual members' expenses for the fiscal year 2011-12. The members will find copies of that report in their own desks here in the House.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased today to introduce a good friend of mine, Joe Neal. He is in the west gallery here. Joe is a ward 1 councillor in the municipality of Clarington and a practising lawyer. Welcome, Joe. Enjoy the day.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to introduce Trevor Kidd. He's a flight paramedic and a long-term resident of my constituency. He testified at the hearings this morning.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce, in the east members' gallery, Amelia McLeod. She's the president of the Queen's debating union, but more importantly, she's working in my office this summer.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased and proud to introduce Feng Bai, who is the mother of page Sam Sun, from the riding of Kitchener-Waterloo.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to introduce Naila Qazi. She's the mother of the page from my riding of Mississauga-Erindale, Sherry Aslam. I want to welcome her to the Legislature.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would like to welcome a former member and a good friend of mine, Joyce Savoline, from Burlington, and Bianca Lankheit.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to welcome guests from the University of Toronto who will be shadowing me today: Rafael, Tarana and Chantelle.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to introduce two young women in the east members' gallery who are volunteering in my constituency office. Samantha Ho is a fourth-year student at York University. She speaks four languages. Atifat Ashraf is a graduate from U of T in economics and international relations.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce my wife, Jane; my mum and dad, Lyle and Jackie; my mother-in-law, Aleta; and my brother- and sister-in-law, Gary and Penny Ludwig.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm delighted to recognize and welcome Oresta Mishalkowsky. She's a constituent in my riding. She won the opportunity to have lunch with me, and that's what we're going to do later today.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I ask all members to help me welcome the grade 5 class from Fred C. Cook Public School from Bradford, who will be joining us momentarily.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for—let me get this right—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, yes. He's so disappointed. Prescott-Russell—

Interjections: Glengarry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Glengarry—Prescott-Russell.

M. Grant Crack: Merci, monsieur le Président. C'est un honneur pour moi ce matin de présenter l'ancien député de Glengarry—Prescott-Russell, M. Jean-Marc Lalonde.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm pleased to welcome a friend of mine, a well-known, well-respected lawyer and a member of the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association: Kris Bonn.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very pleased to introduce two young women: Lauren Hanna, who is just finishing up in my office with the Ontario legislative intern program. Also, welcome to Kartiga Thavarais, who is going to be a summer intern in my office. Please join me in welcoming them.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like to introduce to the House the father of page Louis Vatr, who is here today to see the proceedings and his son's role as a page. Thank you, and welcome.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm delighted today to welcome Joe and Lozanne Wamback, who are the founders of the Canadian Crime Victims Foundation. They are also here to tell us about the Freedom Walk that they are doing across Canada. It's going to come to Queen's Park on June 23. They are welcoming everybody to come by room 212A after question period for just five minutes, and maybe you as an MPP can participate in their Freedom Walk. Joe and Lozanne Wamback, welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

As stated before by myself, the tradition is for the Speaker to acknowledge these wonderful members who have returned to visit, so I would like to introduce, for us to once again receive, Joyce Savoline from Burlington in the 38th and 39th Parliaments. Welcome.

And someone who's probably going to give me proper heck for getting a blank in my mind for the name of the riding, who I'm going to hear from as well, and that is Jean-Marc Lalonde from Prescott-Russell in the 36th and Glengarry—Prescott-Russell from the 37th—

Interjection: Glengarry—Prescott-Russell.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now it's your turn to listen. I said from Prescott-Russell in the 36th Parliament and Glengarry—Prescott-Russell in the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments: Jean-Marc Lalonde.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's my wish that everyone listen.

Anyway, it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. This morning, the public accounts committee heard from flight paramedic Trevor Kidd. Mr. Kidd travelled from Thunder Bay to tell us what it was like, as a front-line flight paramedic, to provide service within

Ornge Air while millions of tax dollars were being wasted and while patients were being put at risk.

Here's what he said when asked why more of his colleagues are not willing to come forward to tell us about their experience: He said they are afraid to lose their jobs.

Speaker, these are our front-line emergency responders of our air ambulance service. I ask the minister this: Why should those front-line emergency responders have to be afraid to tell us about their working conditions in this province? I would ask the minister to respond directly to Mr. Kidd and his colleagues on the front lines.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We think it's very important that we have a full airing of what is happening, or what was happening, at Ornge. That's why public accounts is meeting and will continue to meet to hear from people like Mr. Kidd.

I, of course, am paying attention to the hearings. I think it's important that we do continue to improve operations at Ornge. That's why we have Bill 50 before this House. Bill 50 includes whistle-blower protection. I really wish that if the member opposite was genuinely interested in improving the operations at Ornge, he would quit blocking Bill 50 and support it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, when we raise questions in this House about what's going on at Ornge and why ambulance services cannot respond to emergencies because there are no pilots, because there are no paramedics, because of a faulty interior that doesn't allow paramedics to conduct basic CPR—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Peterborough, come to order.

Mr. Frank Klees: When we raise those issues, the minister accuses us of playing partisan politics. Mr. Kidd raised those same questions in the public accounts committee today. He told us that little, if anything, has changed.

I would like to know now—she accuses us of being partisan—what does she have to say to Mr. Kidd, who is listening to her now? Is he being partisan as well?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I would like to say to Mr. Kidd and to all the witnesses who have come to testify before public accounts committee, thank you. We think it's important that we have a full airing of the issues around Ornge. I think it's also important to note that the committee does provide protection. I would urge the member opposite to stop suggesting otherwise. Witnesses before the committee do have protection, Speaker.

1040

I also would invite the member opposite to reveal the information that he has, because I don't know why he's hiding information when he has no compunction whatsoever in releasing personal health information.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: One of the reasons that we have the information is that the people out there trust us and they don't trust this government. That's why.

They don't trust this government to take them seriously. That's why those paramedics on the front lines continue to try to find a way to get the message through to this government that they continue to experience down-staffing, that there continue to be circumstances where there are no pilots, where there are not enough paramedics and where they cannot respond to emergency calls.

Now, the minister won't listen to us. She continues to say that everything's fine on the front lines. Will she tell Mr. Trevor Kidd and the paramedics on the front lines today that she will now begin to take some decisive action and restore credibility to our air ambulance service?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: My understanding is that Mr. Kidd did leave Ornge in 2009. I can also tell the member opposite that I have met with several current front-line staff at Ornge. They tell me that they are very encouraged by the changes they are seeing.

I've said in this House before that the new leadership at Ornge is very committed to getting the staffing where it needs to be. They're making great progress and I look forward to hearing from them very soon about the progress they're making in their staffing.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Flight paramedic Trevor Kidd—back to the minister—travelled here from Thunder Bay to testify at the hearings into this Ornge air ambulance scandal. He told us why he no longer works there.

Here's what he said about why the exodus of front-line paramedics and pilots continues today. I'll quote from his statement. "Because they feel that the actions done so far have been to try to minimize political fallout, and have little confidence that serious efforts are being made to improve patient care...."

When we raise these concerns in that tone, we're accused of being partisan. I would like the minister now to explain to Mr. Kidd why all of those people on the front lines still don't have confidence, and what will she do to restore that confidence?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can tell you that we are very interested in hearing from all of the witnesses. This particular witness has not worked at Ornge since 2009. I can tell you that the paramedics I speak to are encouraged by our progress.

I think it's also important to recognize the work that our front-line staff are doing rather than having them bashed every day in this Legislature.

Just yesterday, 58 patients were transported by Ornge; 58 patients who are grateful for getting to the care they need. Speaker, 50 of those patients were being transferred from one facility to another. There were seven that were transported by land—babies, pediatric patients—and there was one rotor scene response.

This work is ongoing. We have to say thank you to our very dedicated front-line staff.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, Speaker, I'd like the minister to listen to these statistics, because they are statistics directly from Thunder Bay—just one base—over the last month. Twenty-nine recorded incidents of downtime: 17 due to no paramedic available for 87 hours; 10 due to no pilot available for a total of 90 hours; two incidents of unscheduled maintenance. The minister can tell me about 50 patients who have been transferred. I'm asking her about the many patients who never received a call, who were never able to be attended to.

I'd like to know this: If in fact it was a member of the minister's family to whom an air ambulance was not able to respond, would she stand in her place and be as glib about this incident as she is today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is vitally important that all parts of our health care system are working to their maximum capability. Ornge is making significant progress towards being the very best it can be—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a scam.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In the performance agreement that is in place, the new legislation that is currently before the House will give us the information we need to be able to measure exactly the kinds of questions the member opposite is asking. I think it's vitally important that all members of this House acknowledge that Bill 50 is an important piece of moving forward with Ornge. I do not understand why the member opposite continues to criticize but will not be part of the solution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: What the minister doesn't understand is that this province doesn't need more regulations and regulations; it needs a minister who can hold accountable our air ambulance service. That's what we need.

The reality is that in our hearings so far there are three themes that are developing. One of them is that greed led to waste of precious health care dollars at our air ambulance service. The second is that incompetence and mismanagement have put patients at risk. The third theme is that this government is much more intent on defending itself and diverting attention from itself than it is about getting down to the bottom of fixing what needs to be fixed.

I would suggest to this minister that what she should do now is look carefully at the testimony of Mr. Kidd and others from across this province and admit that she has mishandled this file. What she should do now is either get it fixed or step aside and let someone competent deal with the file.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course we're paying very careful attention to all of the people who are testifying before the Ornge inquiry. I think it's important that we also take advice from other non-partisan, impartial experts. That includes the Auditor General of this province. The Auditor General has acknowledged the significant steps that have been taken. His advice is to do what we are doing in Bill 50.

I do not understand why the member opposite continues to hide information that he has on this issue. I do not understand why he rejects the advice of the Auditor General. If he wants to be part of the solution, then stand up and be part of the solution.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

POWER PLANT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. A decade ago, the Liberal leader promised to run a different sort of government. He promised, "You have a right to know how your money is being spent. We will make sure you can exercise it."

"We will require that all future contracts signed by the government be subject to public scrutiny."

Does the Liberal government still believe that the people of this province, the people who work hard and pay their electricity bills, have a right to know how their money is being spent?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last year, days before an election, the government cancelled construction of a gas-fired generation plant in Mississauga. Since that day, they have refused to tell the people who will pay for that decision how much it's going to cost them.

Ten years ago, the Liberal leader promised, "We will require that all future contracts signed by the government be subject to public scrutiny," and added, "Where legitimate confidentiality concerns prevent certain provisions from being released, we will make them available to the Provincial Auditor to make a public interest ruling."

Why is the government now refusing to do exactly this with regard to the private power plants in Oakville and Mississauga?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy.

1050

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We did say, during September, that the plant would not proceed in Mississauga and that we would work to relocate it—a decision, I might add, that was quickly joined in and confirmed by the third party and by the opposition. They've never changed that. And now what we're involved in are those discussions, those negotiations. And there are some lawsuits on both sides of the border relating to those circum-

stances. When they reach a conclusion and we have more to report—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I asked this awhile ago and I'll ask it again: Inside voices, please.

Minister.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: When they reach a conclusion, when we have more to report addressing the issues that are raised by the leader of the third party, I'm looking forward to being able to speak to them at that time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, contrary to the Minister of Energy's assertions, New Democrats, immediately when that plant was cancelled, contacted the Auditor General and asked him to look into the cost. Via a page, I'll send this letter over to the Minister of Energy so that he can remember how New Democrats reacted to that announcement.

Really, it's pretty simple stuff—it's pretty simple stuff. The people who sent us here are the people who pay the bills. They have a right to know what it is that they're paying for. Building power lines? We're happy to pay for that. Tunnels at Niagara Falls? We're ready to pay. Eighty-million dollar handouts to US hedge funds so the government can win a seat? Not so happy to pay for that. When did the Ontario Liberals so badly lose their way? Where is the Dalton McGuinty of 2002?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: History and the record will confirm, I do believe, that after we announced the intention not to proceed with the gas plant in Mississauga, the third party did support our intention, did not wish the gas plant to proceed; also confirmed by the PCs. They've never changed that position, unless they're now saying to the people of Mississauga and the western GTA that in fact they want it there.

The issue about the results of the very sensitive discussions that we're involved in representing the people of Ontario and the lawsuits where we're representing the people of Ontario—the results of those discussions I look forward to speaking to at the appropriate time.

POWER PLANT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats have always been against Liberal private power deals from day one.

My next question is to the Acting Premier. There is no question that Ontario is facing tough economic times, but when this minority government asks Ontarians to tighten their belts, it should be setting a good example. Instead, they're proving that price is no object when it comes to protecting their own partisan interests. Will this government explain to Ontarians just how much in taxpayers' dollars they're willing to spend to make the Mississauga gas plant go away?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As I indicated to the House, we are in discussions right now about the reloca-

tion of the gas plant that was scheduled for Mississauga and that all three parties agree should not proceed there. Those discussions have not reached a conclusion. There are very sensitive discussions in which the interests of the people of the province of Ontario are at stake, and we're representing those. And there are lawsuits—not surprisingly—on both sides of the border relating to that. As those proceed and as they reach a conclusion, we'll be able to speak to the issues that are raised by the leader of the third party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The interests of the people of Ontario are the last thing that are on the minds of this Liberal government. It's the interests of the Liberals that are on the mind of this government.

This government is crying poor, but they're acting like the last of the big-time spenders when they cancel the Mississauga plant. It's telling northerners on the one hand that there's no money to protect the ONTC; meanwhile, it's slipping Ontario Power Authority \$82.3 million to pay off a US hedge fund. Why can this government find the dough to save its own bacon but nothing to save a vital transportation link for remote northern communities?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'll confine my remarks to the issue about the Mississauga plant, about which, as I recall, the member from Toronto-Danforth, on September 26, 2011, said, "We wouldn't build it." So we're all on the same page.

It is important that we be able to address these issues as they've reached a conclusion—not in the piecemeal rumours, innuendos, suggestions, but as they reach a conclusion, so at that point we can have a full discussion about the relocation and all of the other attendant issues that I'm sure the leader of the third party will want to ask me about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Minister of Energy finally got it right: New Democrats wouldn't have gotten into that private power scheme in the first place.

Speaker, either this government doesn't understand what "getting good value for money" means or they just don't care. Families across the province are stretching their hard-earned wages to pay for groceries and to keep the lights on. Meanwhile, this government is giving away money for nothing.

Yesterday, the Minister of Energy dodged every single question about the cost of cancelling the Mississauga power plant. Will this government come clean today and tell Ontarians how much they're prepared to spend to make that Mississauga gas plant go away?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As I've indicated, both in the House and, of course, at that other place, we're involved in some very sensitive discussions with respect to the Mississauga gas plant. The interests of the people of the province of Ontario are being represented. Those interests won't be assisted if we publicize our position—to the detriment of the interests of the people of the prov-

ince of Ontario—while we're involved in these delicate discussions and the defence and the representation on certain lawsuits. I think it's in the broader interest that we want those to reach a conclusion so that we can speak completely about them at the appropriate time.

In the meantime, we're working very hard on fulfilling the commitment we made not to have the Mississauga gas plant there and to find a place for its relocation.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, recently leaked cabinet documents reveal that, despite the minister's claims, Ornge remains unable to fulfill its mandate and that serious operational service gaps persist. Sadly, the cabinet document confirms that the people of Durham and indeed Peterborough county have experienced first-hand the inadequacies and failings that you have continued under your leadership.

It is saddening to see that on at least six occasions in the last 19 months, the Ministry of Health has investigated an incident involving a patient from Durham or the Peterborough area. Each and every one of these cases is due to the serious issues that the minister refuses to address. I ask her: Given that we know the minister has ignored warnings and refused to act, how can she justify her continued presence in cabinet?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think all of us, no matter what side of this House we sit on, have a responsibility to the people of Ontario. One of those responsibilities is to not misrepresent, to not—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister will withdraw.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I withdraw—to not distort information, to not make an inaccurate representation of the information.

We must all realize that each one of these cases that has been revealed by the member from Newmarket—Aurora—this personal information that has been revealed—each one of those is a person with a family, a family that is grieving, that is dealing with the death of a loved one.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We owe it to them to let them know the truth, not the political spin.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: The minister must answer for her failure in leadership. As a minister of the crown, responsibility for the ongoing compromised patient safety at Ornge rests solely with you.

I'd ask you to look at a specific case. On October 16, 2011, many months after our caucus raised concerns about Ornge, a child from Durham could not be transported by air ambulance to Sick Kids due to the helicopter's faulty interior design. During the land transport, paramedics exhausted supplies of critical medications due to the policies implemented under your team

at Ornge. Paramedics had to make an emergency stop at a hospital to replenish their supplies.

1100

What does the minister have to say to the residents and families of Durham who suffered as a result of your failed leadership? They expect that you would apologize and resign.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: These are very, very serious incidents, Speaker. They have all been thoroughly investigated. The information is available to the coroner of Ontario. The coroner has access to information, does a thorough review and can choose, if he determines it's necessary, to order an inquest.

The chief coroner of Ontario had to issue a statement to clarify the inaccurate depiction of this information. He said very clearly, "Of our completed investigations, there have been no cases in which issues with air ambulance transportation materially affected the course of the patient's illness or injury." The family members deserve to hear from the experts.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre par intérim.

This morning, a former paramedic at Ornge, Mr. Trevor Kidd, who's sitting here with us, testified, "I knew there was corruption going on. I knew about the ski boat, the resort. We knew Dr. Mazza had disappeared from the sunshine list. We knew Steve Farquhar's salary had gone up by \$90,000. We knew about Dr. Mazza's girlfriend.... These were the worst-kept secrets at Ornge."

Did his Minister of Health choose to turn a blind eye to all of these events, or was she oblivious to the whole thing?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I think it's a matter of public record, the strong action that was taken by the Minister of Health when she learned of the problems that were going on at Ornge, the leadership that she showed.

Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange—I have here a letter that was sent to the leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party, December 22, 2010, which outlined many of the Ornge business models and the way moving forward. I believe it was copied to the member who just asked the question. So you can turn the question around, Mr. Speaker, and ask, where was the NDP in raising these concerns?

At the same time, we have learned a lot through the committee. We've learned about what happened at the Oshawa airport, that despite the fact that senior aviation experts were saying that you shouldn't go to the Oshawa airport, we had prominent members of the Conservative Party, both provincial and federal members, lobbying Ornge to have it placed in that community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: At least it was entertaining, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kidd was so concerned about what was happening at Ornge that he actually felt he had to resign. He went to his father, who happens to be the mayor of Temiskaming Shores, Carman Kidd, so that he could ask him to help ring the alarm bells, that what was going on at Ornge was not right. Carman Kidd did help raise the alarm bells. He called the Ministry of Health. He spoke to the director of emergency services. He spoke to Malcolm Bates. He spoke to Kevin Finnerty.

He also called his Liberal MPP. It happened to be David Ramsay at the time. In 2009 he met with him. He met with him again in 2010 and rang the alarm bells. You know what, Mr. Speaker? The more witnesses we hear from, the more red flags we find were raised. Those red flags were raised by Trevor Kidd, Jacob Blum, ministry lawyers. Howard Hampton raised the alarm bell and so did I. Why did the minister ignore the red flags for so many, many years?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, we have a Minister of Health who has taken decisive action to address the concerns at Ornge. We have new leadership at Ornge, Mr. Speaker. We have the Auditor General, who has conducted a thorough review, which is right now being looked at by the public accounts committee. We had forensic auditors who came in, and due to the evidence that they found, the minister brought in the Ontario Provincial Police.

The missing piece of the puzzle, Mr. Speaker, is Bill 50—Bill 50, which brings together the recommendations that were put forward by the auditor. The opposition stands in this Legislature and claims that they want to make changes to Ornge, that they want to have better oversight at Ornge and better accountability. Then I ask them, why are they not supporting Bill 50? Will the New Democratic Party allow Bill 50 to go through so that we can put that final piece in place and make the changes that are necessary at that organization?

HUNTING AND FISHING

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question this morning is to the hard-working and dedicated Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, I understand that Ontario has moved away from the paper-based system of issuing hunting and fishing licences and towards a more efficient and modern licensing system. Many of my constituents in the riding of Peterborough, the headquarters of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, have bought their fishing and/or hunting licences for the season, and they're telling me that the system makes it easier for them to get out and enjoy Ontario's great outdoors.

Minister, can you elaborate, for the members of this House and all Ontarians, on how the new system works and remind those anglers and hunters who have not yet bought one where they can go to get their new licence and Ontario Outdoors Card—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Jeff Leal: —like the minister and I did several months ago—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Tennessee: Yours to Discover.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not the time to do that. And this is the way I'd like it.

Minister.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It was great to be with the MPP for Peterborough when we were at the Outdoors Card centre a couple months ago, getting our Outdoors Cards.

Indeed, we are rolling out a new, modern system that will make it easier for anglers and hunters to get their licences. The new system offers many more options for getting and renewing licences. You can get your fishing and hunting licences online, by phone from the comfort of your home, local store or a ServiceOntario centre.

Since December, almost 1.3 million licences, Outdoors Cards and tags have been sold. I want to report also that all 69 ServiceOntario centres that are selling hunting and fishing licences are up and running. Over 867 private issuers are currently using the new system.

Hunting and fishing is a tremendous way for Ontarians to get out and experience the great outdoors and also a great contributor to our economy, and we ask more people to use the new system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Speaker, we won't need a late show with that comprehensive answer. Thank you, Minister, for sharing the detailed information on our new licensing system.

Minister, both opposition parties have made claims that there are privacy risks, as the company contracted to manage our new and more efficient hunting and fishing licensing system is based in the United States. They claim that the information held by the company may be used inappropriately or accessed through the Patriot Act.

Minister, the Information and Privacy Commissioner was at Queen's Park Monday to table her annual report in the Legislature. I understand she spoke about this very important issue.

Minister, I know that you have on numerous occasions expressed confidence in the privacy provisions that are built into our government's contract. Based on what the privacy commissioner said yesterday, should hunters and anglers still be concerned that their privacy is at risk?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: That's a great question, and I appreciate the opportunity to respond. Indeed, the privacy commissioner was here at Queen's Park, and she did make very specific reference to the issue that had come up related to privacy. She told us she will also be presenting us with a report on that issue, and we look forward to that report and any recommendations she may have.

She also had a chance to express her support for the work MNR is doing to ensure the privacy of Ontarians remains very safe. Specifically on MNR's contractual agreement with the company, the commissioner said, "There's a very tight contract. There are very tight service provisions.... And there's an audit provision so that

their use of data will be carefully audited.... I have no concerns about that whatsoever."

Speaker, we welcome the comments made by the commissioner. We will certainly continue to work co-operatively to address any future concerns or questions that she may have.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Health. I rise today not to question the minister's ability to manage Ornge or emergency dispatching in Waterloo region, because let's be honest: We all know she has miserably failed at both. Instead, I rise today to question the minister's ability to manage basic correspondence.

Minister, Waterloo region chair Ken Seiling sent you a letter dated February 10, calling on you and your government to address serious problems with emergency dispatching in the region of Waterloo. But here we are, four months later, and you haven't even replied to the region's concerns.

1110

Minister, my question today is simple: Do you have any plans to respond to this important public safety concern raised by elected officials at Waterloo region, yes or no?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I take my correspondence very seriously, and there are issues that are raised that deserve a thoughtful, thorough reply. This particular piece of correspondence is one of them. I can assure you that I am aware of this correspondence, and we will be replying to Mr. Seiling when we have a complete and full answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Again to the minister: I guess four months later is better late than never, I suppose.

Just last year, confusion between emergency dispatching centres led to a significant delay in both the land and Ornge air ambulance response to a fatal helicopter crash in the region of Waterloo. This should have been a wake-up call for the Liberal government, especially since the region has been pleading for the province's help.

Speaker, the problem gets even worse. The letter I'm holding here was also c.c.'d to John Milloy, the member for Kitchener Centre, but he has decided to ignore the region's concerns as well. Since the member for Kitchener Centre has completely failed as a regional minister to stand up for the people in Waterloo region, the PC Party will.

Minister, how can the people of Waterloo region have any faith in your government when you and your colleagues continue to overlook these life-and-death matters?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

I am very concerned about the continuation of comments after we start to get quiet—to be used as a moment

in which you believe that's the best time for you to heckle. It isn't.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It isn't from you either.

My frustration isn't the fact that there's heckling; my frustration is the fact that you yourself should be controlling yourselves. If you want me to do it, you will not like it.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When the member raised this issue a week or two ago, I spoke to him privately and I told him in the House that we actually are piloting something pretty exciting in Kitchener-Waterloo, and that is simultaneous dispatch, where the firefighters and the ambulances will be notified simultaneously so that care can get to people as quickly as possible. This is an important move forward, Speaker.

The request from Mr. Seiling, as I understand it, is to have all emergency notified at once. That is a very significant departure from where we are now, Speaker. We are looking at ways to improve response times, and I think simultaneous dispatch is a very exciting option. I'm pleased that it will be piloted first in Kitchener-Waterloo.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Finding a job is a worry to thousands of people in southwestern Ontario. There are 23,000 people out of work in London, and Windsor's unemployment rates remain in the double digits. Can families in southwestern Ontario, who are worried about their jobs, expect the southwestern economic development bill to become law this spring?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for that friendly question. It's important, I think, that people throughout southwestern Ontario are made aware of the status of the southwestern Ontario development fund, because, unfortunately, it's locked in this Legislature right now, waiting for third reading, because the PC Party has been ringing the bells. It hasn't allowed that very important piece of legislation to pass. The result is, because the PC Party do not support the investments that we want to make, and the NDP support, in southwestern Ontario, those investments at this point in time are being delayed. Jobs, important jobs, in southwestern Ontario are not being created.

I join with the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, in urging the PC Party to let us get that bill through this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let us support the economy in southwestern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let us support the workers—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Another reminder to all members that when I say, "Thank you," that is the end of your answer or question.

Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd appreciate it if you'd say it sooner—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd appreciate it if you'd stop it.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Back to the Minister of Economic Development: This government said that passing the southwestern economic development bill was an urgent priority. The government House leader said: "Southwestern Ontario needs this sort of support sooner rather than later.... We want to get it through the Legislature."

And the Liberal MPP for Windsor West said: "I ... hope this fund is up and running in the spring."

New Democrats agree that we should be getting this fund up and running now, so why is this government dragging its heels, unlikely to pass its own bill before this session ends next week?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It was fully our intention, and we expressed that, to have that money flowing into southwestern Ontario, and into eastern Ontario, for that matter, by this June. But because of the tactics of the PC Party, because of their lack of support for jobs in southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville will withdraw.

Mr. Steve Clark: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Brad Duguid: But let me exchange quotes with the member opposite, because she had some good quotes. I have some as well.

This is a quote from Mayor John Grace, from the London Free Press, and this is what he had to say: "It is the wrong time to be playing politics, the wrong time to hold this up. The last thing we need here is another stall tactic."

That's all we've had from the party opposite, Mr. Speaker, is stall tactics. We need to move forward and create jobs in southwestern Ontario.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, getting our children to eat right and exercise is the best way to confront the growing childhood obesity. But as a mother of a 14-year-old, I know how hard it can be sometimes to get our kids to eat right and exercise. That is why this government has started programs such as EatRight Ontario, the Healthy Schools initiative, and curriculum revisions.

But, Minister, there's still more to be done, and I understand that is why you're striking a Healthy Kids panel. Could you tell this House how this panel will help reduce childhood obesity in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for this very important question. I'm very proud to say that the government is making the right choice to reduce the rate of childhood

obesity in this province. We've committed to the ambitious goal to reduce the rate by 20% over five years.

But in order to achieve this goal, we cannot work alone. We must work closely with all of the sectors that have a role to play in reducing childhood obesity. These include our schools, industry, communities, other levels of government and others.

The panel members are independent experts. They're recognized leaders in their fields. They possess important qualities which will be beneficial to their work. They've got an expertise and knowledge of the factors that influence obesity rates, a demonstrated commitment to address childhood obesity, and they are champions and leaders who will really drive this change we need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister. The creation of this panel, Minister, depends on the collaboration of a number of stakeholders who are interested in reducing childhood obesity. I know this panel has generated a lot of interest in my own riding, with groups like TransformNation doing a lot of the grassroots work on this.

Minister, can you tell me and the House, why is it important to tackle childhood obesity?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's a bit of a cliché, but it's true that the children are the future of this province. Addressing the factors that contribute to obesity early in a person's life helps reduce the likelihood of being overweight and obese in adolescence and adulthood.

Childhood obesity is strongly linked to increased risk of hypertension, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, gall bladder disease, stroke, and certain types of cancer, including breast and colon cancer. Working to find ways to reduce and prevent childhood obesity will greatly change the lives of many children in this province and will also reduce the burden on our Ontario health care system in years to come.

Bringing together this panel of experts from diverse backgrounds offers Ontario a unique opportunity. By the end of this year, the panel will provide me with a set of prioritized, evidence-based recommendations that build on existing initiatives and create new ones.

1120

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is for the Minister of Finance. Earlier this winter, you proudly announced that slots operations would be shut down at Ontario's racetracks by March 31, 2013. You then announced that slot machines would be removed from the province's three border racetracks—Fort Erie, Windsor and Hiawatha—on April 30, 2012.

Sadly, following its annual board meeting yesterday, the Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium said that Fort Erie Race Track would close permanently, putting hundreds of hard-working men and women out of work.

Minister, please inform the over 60,000 people employed by the horse racing industry what your plan is for

them now that you have single-handedly destroyed their industry and their livelihoods.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, so the Legislature—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Maybe they can go to work at GM.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is warned.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Last year, horse racing at Fort Erie received \$8.6 million from the slots-at-racetracks subsidy. Above and beyond that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Above and beyond that, the government provided an additional \$6 million over the past three years.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, second time.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: And above that, the government provided another \$1 million from economic development and trade.

Earlier this year, the member for Niagara Falls asked for a business plan—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton, come to order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: For a member who has spoken passionately about corporate welfare, this simply wasn't sustainable. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will have more to say about the people in the industry very shortly, but make no mistake, unlike you when you were—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Before I move to the supplementary, I will now tell you that I will look to each member and start identifying you, which will lead to a warning. The warning is only one.

Supplementary, please.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Since the MPP from Niagara Falls won't stand up in his place and ask the tough questions on behalf of his constituents, I will. I would again direct my question to the Minister of Finance.

The historic Fort Erie Race Track's first day of operation was Wednesday, June 16, 1897—and sadly, the final day of racing will be October 30. This is a racetrack that has survived not only the Great Depression but also two world wars and other turbulence throughout its long and storied history. Unfortunately the 115-year-old racetrack will be joining the Windsor Raceway in line for mothballing by this minister. What is your plan for the hundreds of men and women in Fort Erie and Windsor who now find themselves out of work as a result of your poor decisions?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That member's party, when it came to saving GM, said, "Let 400,000 jobs be lost." Shame on you. That member—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That member ought to stand up for his riding. Instead of blocking the southwest Ontario economic development fund, he ought to let it be passed.

I'll remind the member opposite that the mayors of London and other southwestern Ontario communities wrote him directly and said that he doesn't have a clue when it comes to horse racing.

We are making the right choices. There will continue to be a horse racing industry. The only difference is that it will be strong and viable and self-supporting. It won't be reliant on handouts from a government that prefers to close hospitals and fund racetracks. Their priorities are wrong, they're different from ours and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MERCURY POISONING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Acting Premier. For decades, the communities of Grassy Narrows and Whitedog First Nation have been dealing with the after-effects of mercury poisoning. A new study by the world's leading mercury poisoning scientist, Dr. Harada, shows that 59% of community members are suffering from the effects of this poisoning, including 44% of those who were born after the dumping of mercury had ended. Despite that, despite the cessation of dumping, this proves that the poisoning continues.

Now we find out that this poisoning will affect many generations. They are forced to rely on scientists in Japan to monitor their health and the impact because this government walked away in the 1990s. Will this government act immediately to sit down with Grassy Narrows and Whitedog to listen to their concerns?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, let me say that this is a dreadful situation that never should have happened. The dumping that happened in the 1960s and 1970s never should have happened.

I welcome the people in the gallery who have come. I will be going out to the front lawn today to meet with them. What I commit is that I will do everything I can to re-engage the federal government and the community in a conversation about this situation.

I have received the report. I have had a chance to look at it. I know that there's a lot of work that has been done—mercury levels are down about 87%—but there's still a consumption advisory in place on the fish. That's why it's very important that we continue this conversation. But I will say to the member opposite: We weren't in office in the 1990s, and so the decisions that were made in the 1990s are not the decisions that we have made.

What we have said is, we want to engage the community. In the supplementary, I will go through the sequence of initiatives that we've taken.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton, come to order.

Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Residents from both communities have travelled thousands of kilometres to the Legislature today, and as the minister pointed out, they are joining us here in the members' gallery this morning. They wanted to meet with the Premier, but they received no response.

In the 1980s, a compensation fund was set up for community members to help them deal with the after-effects of this poisoning. Unfortunately, many have found it nearly impossible to access the compensation that they deserve. In one case, a woman who was used as the test case in court to prove the existence of mercury poisoning has not even received compensation herself.

I ask again: Will this government meet with Grassy Narrows First Nation to address mercury poisoning instead of dodging their basic responsibilities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Absolutely. I will stand in for the Premier and I will be meeting with the community; absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to be clear that on April 21, 2010, the then minister met with a community delegation led by Chief Simon Fobister. In June 2010, we formed an inter-ministerial working group to look at the issues that had come out of the Harada report. In June 2011, staff from my ministry met with Chief Fobister on the community's concerns. Since then, we've been waiting for a response from the community to set up that next meeting. That needs to happen. If the communication has not been in place and we need to reach out and set up that meeting, that's what we will do, because that ADM committee needs to have the input of the community so we understand the situation better.

I'll be talking to the folks on the lawn today. I will be having that conversation, and we will re-engage; absolutely.

FIRST NATIONS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is also for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Minister, a big part of the work of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs is to work with First Nations and the federal government to find solutions to long-standing historical grievances. Just recently, we saw a settlement with the Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation to resolve a flooding claim stemming from events that happened over 100 years ago.

Can the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs tell us more about Ontario's general approach to resolving these types of historical grievances?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm really very pleased to be able to talk about the claims process, because it's one of the ways in which we're working to build those stronger relationships with the aboriginal community.

The successful resolution of the flooding claim that my colleague mentioned will create a positive economic environment for Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation as well as for the regional economy and for nearby communities,

because I think it's important to understand that the land claims process doesn't just affect the First Nation but affects the broader community as well.

We're acting on the recommendations of the Ipperwash inquiry, which we set up, to strengthen relationships.

Land claim negotiations, we believe, are by far the preferable alternative to litigation. Negotiation settlements result in enduring solutions. They strengthen relationships and they provide certainty for aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to learn about Ontario's approach in taking its responsibility to work with First Nations, the federal government and local communities to settle these types of historic land claims.

Speaker, I understand that eastern Ontario is actually home to the largest territory subject to a claim currently under negotiation in Ontario. The Algonquin land claim has been under negotiation since 1994, and Ontarians are beginning to ask questions as to the status of that negotiation.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the minister please provide an update and let us know what the settlement of this long-standing land claim will mean for communities in eastern Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I guess the first thing I want to say about that eastern Ontario land claim is that public consultation is an integral part of the process. I was asked this week, earlier, by the fishers and anglers whether there would be ongoing public consultation, and indeed that is our commitment. That will happen.

Canada, Ontario and the Algonquins of Ontario are working together to resolve a comprehensive land claim through a negotiated settlement, and it will produce, at its completion, Ontario's first modern-day, constitutionally protected treaty. This is a major, major process.

Again, settlement of the claim will provide certainty for the Algonquins of Ontario regarding rights but also to the larger community regarding land and natural resources. It will improve eastern Ontario's business climate, and it will allow the Algonquin people and their neighbours to work together.

Public consultation is ongoing and will be comprehensive.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Attorney General. Last Saturday, an individual out on bail unleashed a reign of terror in the Eaton Centre. We now know that Mr. Husbands was on house arrest, related to a sexual assault charge stemming from a November 2010 incident. Minister, yesterday, when referring to the house arrest system in the province of Ontario, you said you think the system is working well. Do you believe the victims of the Eaton Centre rampage believe that?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, obviously, our thoughts and prayers go out to all of the victims who were involved last Saturday in this very tragic event.

The system of bail that we have in the province of Ontario and in Canada has been in existence since the mid-1970s, and it has existed that way under all governments of this province and of this country, Speaker.

It is the responsibility of the judiciary, under the Bail Reform Act, to set out the conditions of bail that are applicable in a particular situation. In this particular situation, bail was granted. An order was made—we can't release the terms of that—by the court etc., but that's the situation that the gentleman was under. The matter of the trial that he was involved with started some time ago, and it is to continue later on this month with respect to the sexual assault charge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, the people of Ontario are absolutely disturbed, but now they're looking for answers. The individual had a history of criminal activity. Someone known to police for having a violent history killed a 24-year-old man and randomly shot several others, including a 13-year-old boy who was shot in the head. You have a responsibility to ensure that all available conditions are imposed when individuals refuse to comply with their bail conditions.

Minister, how can you say that the bail system is working when it leads to one man dead and several victims?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, the rules relating to bail, that have been in existence for the last 35 years, are part of the federal system of laws that we administer at the provincial level, Speaker.

The first trial date with respect to this particular issue—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. John Gerretsen: —before the court on right now, was set in September 2011. That trial is continuing.

There have been many individuals who are out on bail under a system that has worked relatively well since the mid-1970s, Speaker. Obviously, in this particular case, something happened last Saturday that never should have happened. The system of bail that we have has worked relatively well in the province of Ontario for the last 35 years.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The King family in my riding have five-year-old twins diagnosed with autism. Dr. King and his wife wanted the best possible life for their twins, so they paid out of pocket, at great financial cost, for the IBI therapy, and they sat on a wait-list. Finally, after years of waiting, they're being told their kids are no longer eligible, because they've become proficient at cognitive tests being used as the sole determinant for therapy. Does the minister think that this situation sounds just?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member opposite for the question. Obviously, the services that we provide for families with children with autism are a high priority of

this government. That's why, in fact, since 2003, we've quadrupled the resources that we've provided to these services: the important IBI programs that the member opposite references. I'd be happy to discuss this specific issue with the member opposite to—I'm not familiar with the specific case, but I do want to say that as well, last year, we added an additional \$25 million in funding for ABA treatment, which this individual may be eligible for. It's an important option available for families with children with autism. It's an option, actually, that often is a preferable one for families that they choose for a variety of reasons.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: The therapy is being denied solely on the basis of an IQ test, ignoring the behaviour issues, which also greatly impact opportunities for these kids. Even worse, it seems the criteria being used in our region—in Niagara—are not the same as what's being used in other parts of the province.

Does the minister think that it is fair that the eligibility for IBI therapy is dependent upon the region in which you live rather than on the benefit that it would bring to these children?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you again. I have to admit that the characterization of this particular challenge does not make sense to me in terms of the policies that are in place across the province. I want to say, in terms of eligibility as well as the decision taken when IBI or ABA is no longer being provided to a specific child, that there are important measures in place. Obviously, we talked to the organization, and ultimately it's the organization providing the services that provides us with the guidance and advice in terms of whether that service is useful.

But we're also setting up a clinical expert committee to help us give a greater role to families so that it's taken away from any sort of centralized decision-making process. In fact, it's experts who provide guidance to the families and to the organizations involved, to determine in fact whether a particular service is being of benefit to that child. But again, I'm happy to talk about this specific case.

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today in question period, I heard a couple of times where comments were made about other members. I find them disturbing. I would wish, as a caution and maybe as reflection, that we think twice before we make accusations towards another member of their duties.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's my pleasure today to welcome Kelly MacDougall and Chris Bedwell—they're self-advocates who are here today to join us in the House—as

well as Connie Harrison and William Easter. Thank you for coming and welcome to the House today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CONCERNS IN PERTH–WELLINGTON

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Earlier this year I sent a newsletter to all my constituents. The response was very positive, especially on the survey that people sent back by email and online. Here's just a sample of what people are saying.

Kevin from St. Pauls writes, "We just want our governments to live within their means and pay the bills." The most important issue to Joe from Listowel is, "Making sure that the province has a secure future." Rick from St. Marys is concerned about apprenticeship ratios. Roger from Stratford agrees. He also writes that the cost of energy, taxes, CPP premiums, EI premiums, stat holidays, insurance, fuel, accounting, legal, paperwork, maintenance and now mandatory WSIB, are all too high.

My constituent Darrel says, "Other countries are putting these wind turbine projects on hold but we are blindly going forward."

More than 77% of respondents agreed that our communities need a greater say over the placement of industrial wind turbines. Thinking of their personal economic circumstances, 38% of respondents are not confident in the future, and that's very troubling. Over 60% believe that the provincial government is in general on the wrong track.

I am very pleased that so many of my constituents took time to respond with their ideas and concerns. I certainly am honoured to serve them. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members' statements? The member from Trinity–Spadina

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much, Speaker. "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—14,000 people have signed this petition—"Whereas the Ontario government has closed most of Ontario Place to plan"—

Interjection: Members' statements.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, sorry. Members' statements. I beg your pardon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you very much. You're ahead of yourself.

We'll restart the clock.

EVENTS IN KIRKLAND LAKE

Mr. John Vanthof: On Friday, June 1, I had the opportunity to attend the opening ceremonies and walk a few laps in the Kirkland Lake edition of the Relay for Life—in the rain. As we all know, this event is held to recognize those who have fought, those who are fighting and those who will fight and someday beat the disease that has touched all of us, cancer.

The irony of the rain falling on this evening was not lost on the walkers. For weeks, people from Kirkland

Lake had been praying for rain. The town had been under a state of emergency since Sunday, May 20, when Kirkland Lake number 8, as the fire was to be known, came perilously close to levelling the town's main employer and threatening the town itself. A quick response from the MNR fire crews diverted the first wave of flames, but the threat persisted. Emergency Management Ontario, the OPP, town staff and many others prepared plans for a mass evacuation. It all depended on the direction of the wind and on the efforts of the firefighters in the forest and in the air.

Three hundred people were forced out of their homes for over a week. I have never experienced anything quite like it. People seemed to go about their business like any other day, but the mood at the Tim Hortons was different. Someone compared it to waiting for a hurricane. In the end the wind held, the fire was contained and disaster was averted. It had been a long 10 days.

As I drove home, the signs posted along Kirkland's main street, known locally as the Mile of Gold, said it all: "Thank you, firefighters." And on that rainy evening, thank you, walkers.

TREE CANOPY

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to stand and applaud the work of Mark Cullen and a group of not-for-profit coalition members, 12 of whom are working together to deal with the issue of the tree canopy in Toronto, especially in the GTA area.

Our GTA is expected to grow by 2.7 million people over the next 30 years. As our population grows and the building projects happen, our trees are certainly in jeopardy. A tree requires 500 square feet of root space. Currently, our Toronto tree canopy stores 1.1 million metric tonnes of carbon, and our trees intercept 1,430 metric tonnes of air pollutants each year as well as absorb stormwater runoff. They also drive up our property values and put money in our pockets because trees, in particular, reduce the amount of energy used in our own homes. They can either shade or they can provide, during the winter months, certain conditions as well.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to do something. We're losing our trees. They're down 19%—the emerald ash borer, in particular. And trees are an integral part of what we need throughout Ontario, but in particular in our urban settings.

Mark Cullen and the group are doing an absolutely superb job by helping to restore that canopy in the GTA. I'd like to applaud their work, and I'm pleased to be able to say I'm part of that coalition.

D-DAY ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Robert Bailey: I stand today on the 68th anniversary of D-Day in honour of the 14,000 men of the 3rd Canadian Division and the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade.

In the early morning hours of June 6, 1944, with great courage, these men stormed the near-impassable barrier

of Hitler's Atlantic wall. That day, as part of the Allied forces effort, some 130,000 Allied troops landed on the shores of Normandy. At Juno Beach, the tenacity of Canadian troops quickly overwhelmed the surprised Nazi forces. In doing so, our troops helped to establish an 80-kilometre beachhead with Allied forces, a turning point that would lead to the eventual defeat of Germany in the Second World War.

Last June 6th, I had the opportunity to travel to Juno Beach and visit that hallowed ground. I stood on the sands where those brave young Canadians and others fought their way so ferociously through the killing zone of German artillery, and where 344 soldiers made that ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives in the fight to liberate Europe.

I ask today, as we tend to the business of our individual lives, that each of us reflects upon the past service and sacrifice of our veterans in all conflicts, and we give thanks for their determination and commitment to protecting our traditions of freedom, justice and democracy.

BOOK PUBLISHERS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Today I rise in support of Ontario's book publishers. I'm thrilled to be going on a publishing tour this Friday, and I look forward to learning more about the fantastic work publishers are doing in Trinity-Spadina.

My community is overflowing with talented writers. Book publishers help encourage these writers and promote their work to new audiences.

Canadian publishers are champions of local writers. Without these strong local voices, we might not see ourselves reflected back in the books we read. That would be an enormous loss to our sense of shared identity as Canadians.

The cultural benefits of Ontario's publishing industry cannot be understated, but book publishers also have a tremendous impact on our economy. Book publishing provides Ontario with \$1 billion in annual revenues and 5,600 direct jobs. In fact, 80% of our Canadian book publishers are based right here in Ontario.

Robertson Davies, a great Canadian writer, said, "A truly great book should be read in youth, again in maturity and once more in old age, as a fine building should be seen by morning light, at noon and by moonlight." I agree.

We need to make sure readers will continue to find these great books by supporting a strong local publishing industry here in Ontario.

ONTARIO CRAFT BEER WEEK

Ms. Helena Jaczek: This year marks the third annual Ontario Craft Beer Week, which celebrates Ontario's small and independent brewers and the quality local products they produce.

Starting June 17, until June 23, Ontario's 29 independent breweries will be hosting many community events to introduce and promote their locally crafted beers.

Ontarians will have the opportunity to enjoy premium products at their neighbourhood pubs, restaurants, event venues and service clubs.

My riding of Oak Ridges-Markham is home to the King Brewery, a local craft brewery established in 2002 in the town of Nobleton. The King Brewery is focused on tradition and craftsmanship and seeks to be recognized as a leader in the premium beer market. I'm proud to say that it placed first at the Speaker's annual beer-tasting reception, with many enjoying the brewery's unique King Pilsner in the golden lagers, pilsners and light beer category.

Over the years, Ontario Craft Beer Week has grown in size and scope, now offering over 150 premium beers, the opportunity to personally meet local producers, and great food and entertainment.

I encourage Ontarians to get to know what products their local communities have to offer. There's a new mobile application that helps people find their local breweries. Simply go to my Facebook page to download the app for your smart phone.

1510

MINING VIDEO AWARDS

Mr. Norm Miller: Last night, I had the pleasure of attending So You Think You Know Mining awards gala hosted by the Ontario Mining Association and held at the Royal Ontario Museum. So You Think You Know Mining is a high school video competition in which students from across the province submit videos highlighting the importance of mining in our lives.

In its fourth year, the competition is growing rapidly. This year, 135 videos were received, and the students were competing for over \$33,000 in prize money.

Scott Keyes from London won the \$5,000 grand prize for his video The Melodic Miners, and Brooklyn Vercruyssen and Jeremy Keith were runners-up.

Awards were also taken home by Hananeel Robertson, Andy Le, Peter Lilly, Leah Gosselin, Braedan Lee, Amin Khajehnasiri, Erind Zaganjori, Omar Hoblos and Cody Trites.

Mining is one of our most powerful economic drivers in this province. It creates high-paying, high-skilled jobs and provides the resources that keep this province running.

Not only are these bright young students educating themselves as to the opportunities and possibilities in mining, but they're educating others as well.

I want to offer my congratulations to each of the nominees and winners and to everyone who submitted a video and thank the Ontario Mining Association for hosting this event.

DARSHAN SINGH BAINS

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Professor Darshan Singh Bains was editor and owner of Ajit Weekly newspaper in Toronto.

Dr. Singh was born in India, where he worked as an educator. In Canada, he started the Ajit Weekly news-

paper, which is now published at four locations: Ontario, British Columbia, New York and California.

He was a role model in Punjabi media and a strong voice for multiculturalism; never afraid to speak the truth and a defender of the underprivileged.

He was the architect and organizer of the World Punjabi Conference, a forum to introduce the Punjabi language and culture to the world. It also helped the young generation of Punjabi-speaking people to connect with their culture and language.

He also championed the Kalm Language Development Foundation of North America, a group dedicated to the development of the Punjabi language worldwide. He authored seven books in English and Punjabi.

On May 18, 2012, he lost his battle with cancer. He's survived by his wife, Kanwaljit Kaur, and sons Sunny and Vinni.

Dr. Bains will be missed. Rest in peace, Dr. Bains.

FLOODING IN THUNDER BAY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to take time today to offer, on behalf of our caucus, our sympathies to the victims of the recent flooding to hit Thunder Bay. I also want to pay tribute to the spirit of generosity the community has shown through the wake of this disaster.

When I spoke earlier with Mayor Keith Hobbs, a friend of mine, he estimated that the basements of 1,000 homes were flooded after more than 100 millimetres of rain hit the city last week. He said that that was more rain than they had in the entire month of May of any other year. This has, of course, crippled the city's sewage treatment plant, which only made matters worse.

The city of Thunder Bay declared a state of emergency and has asked the provincial government to make an official disaster declaration.

I want to say to the mayor, the council, the city staff and all of the EMS personnel, they deserve the support for their efforts to assist those affected by this situation.

The Salvation Army and the Red Cross launched national appeals for help in the wake of the flooding, and people have responded.

As a fellow northerner, I would say that the aftermath of this will linger for weeks, if not years, and I urge all of us Ontarians to do what we can to help those affected.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norm Miller: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move its adoption.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Miller from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts met on Wednesday, June 6, 2012, to consider the 2012 Special Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario on Ornge Air Ambulance and Related Services.

During this meeting the committee adopted a motion requesting that the House authorize the Speaker to issue his warrant for the appearance of Dr. Chris Mazza, former president and CEO of Ornge, before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, in room number 151, Legislative Building, Queen's Park, Toronto, at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, July 18, 2012. That Dr. Chris Mazza produce all documents relating to the 2012 Special Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario on Ornge Air Ambulance and Related Services. That, if necessary the warrant can be delivered to Dr. Chris Mazza's attorney, Roger D. Yachetti, QC.

Your committee therefore requests that the House authorize the Speaker to issue his warrant, as provided in section 35 of the Legislative Assembly Act, requiring the appearance of Dr. Chris Mazza, before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Miller presents the committee's report and moves its adoption.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly it is the will of the public accounts committee to get Dr. Chris Mazza, who is a central, key figure in the Ornge air ambulance investigation, to come before the committee to answer questions. A Speaker's warrant has previously been issued, but we were not able to have Dr. Mazza come before the committee because of some ongoing health concerns. It is looking like he may very well be able to come in mid-summer, and we are very much interested in seeing him. That's why this request for a Speaker's warrant has been put forward in the report.

I would move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. John Vanthof: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 with respect to the height of wood frame buildings / Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment en ce qui a trait à la hauteur des bâtiments à ossature de bois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA PROTECTION DES GRANDS LACS

Mr. Bradley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin / Projet de loi 100, Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'll confine that to the time dedicated for ministerial statements.

BALANCED BUDGET AND DEBT LIMIT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR L'ÉQUILIBRE BUDGÉTAIRE ET LA LIMITATION DE LA DETTE

Mr. Leone moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to enact the Balanced Budget Act, 2012 and to amend the Financial Administration Act / Projet de loi 101, Loi édictant la Loi de 2012 sur l'équilibre budgétaire et modifiant la Loi sur l'administration financière.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Rob Leone: This bill is going to reintroduce the Balanced Budget Act, 1999, that was repealed in December 2004. In addition to mandating that the government balance its books by the fiscal year 2018-19 or else face a pay cut, this bill also seeks to put a maximum limit to the amount of debt that we can incur in the province of Ontario to 50% of GDP.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (BLOCKER PADS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (BLOQUEURS)

Mr. Jackson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend the Education Act to restrict the use of blocker pads / Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation pour restreindre l'utilisation de bloqueurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the please of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for short statement.

Mr. Rod Jackson: This bill is essentially an amendment to the Education Act that will ban foam blocker pads similar to those used in sports throughout Ontario's school system. It will be exempt for the use of sport.

Foam blocker pads can be defined as movable pads that are made of foam or a similar material that are designed to provide a barrier to impede the movement of a person. It would be an offence for a person to use a blocker pad to impede the movement of another person on school premises or in any other school-related activity except if the other person is engaging in a school-related sporting activity where a blocker pad is required to assure the safety of the other person.

This also would require reporting of violations of the act.

GREAT LAKES SHORELINE RIGHT OF PASSAGE ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE DROIT DE PASSAGE SUR LE LITTORAL DES GRANDS LACS

Mr. Craitor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to create a right of passage along the shoreline of the Great Lakes / Projet de loi 103, Loi créant un droit de passage le long du littoral des Grands Lacs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried?

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Kim Craitor: The bill creates a right of passage along the shoreline of the Great Lakes between the water's edge and the high-water mark. The right is limited as specified in the bill. In layman's language, what it simply says is that the people of Ontario have the right to walk along our Great Lakes, along the shoreline. This bill will ensure that there's a right of passage established and it will determine the conditions under which people are allowed to enjoy the Great Lakes by walking along their shoreline.

I'm pleased to introduce it again for the third time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Contrary to popular belief, you can also be told to stop heckling outside of question period.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PROTECTION OF GREAT LAKES

Hon. James J. Bradley: The speech from the throne in November 2011 stated our government's commitment to develop a Great Lakes Protection Act. Today, I have

the honour of introducing proposed legislation that, if passed, would help restore and protect the Great Lakes so that they stay drinkable, swimmable and fishable.

From the earliest days of the First Nations, the story of our province has unfolded through our connection to, and dependence on, our Great Lakes and their many tributary rivers and streams. Holding one fifth of the world's surface freshwater resources, home to biologically rich ecosystems, they have supplied our drinking water, powered our towns and cities, irrigated our farms, filled our fishers' nets, cooled our factories and provided countless hours of recreation, relaxation and spiritual sustenance for Ontario families and visitors alike. Our Great Lakes are the great keystone of our economy and quality of life.

Ontario has long worked to protect the Great Lakes. Levels of many toxic chemicals have been reduced. Polluted hot spots have been cleaned up in Collingwood Harbour and Severn Sound on Georgian Bay, and Wheatley Harbour on Lake Erie. And we have seen the return of bald eagles and Atlantic salmon to Lake Ontario. These are heartening accomplishments, and members on all sides of the House can justly feel pride in them.

But population growth and emerging issues, including new chemicals of concern, invasive species, pollution and climate change, are stressing the Great Lakes. New challenges are overwhelming old solutions. That is why our government is introducing the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act today.

The proposed act, an enabling act, would, if passed, provide new tools for the Ontario government to protect beaches, wetlands and other coastal areas of the Great Lakes, and the waterways that flow into them. It would establish a Great Lakes guardians' council. The council would be chaired by the Minister of the Environment and would include other ministers with Great Lakes responsibilities as well as representatives of municipalities, First Nations and Métis communities, and other stakeholders. The council would identify provincial Great Lakes improvement priorities and focus resources on addressing these provincial priorities.

The proposed act would authorize the Minister of the Environment to set targets and to require public bodies to develop and implement initiatives to address particular Great Lakes problems. The proposed act would be accompanied by a Great Lakes community action fund. The fund would help volunteers to undertake improvement projects in their corner of the Great Lakes. A cottagers' association could conduct a spring cleanup project to remove trash from a stretch of shoreline or wetland. A service organization could organize a weekly beach patrol to keep beaches clear of flotsam and jetsam throughout the warmer-weather months. A fishing club could sponsor tree plantings along the shores of a tributary stream to shade and cool the water, improving sport fish habitat.

We are committed to working with all orders of government, with aboriginal communities and with our partners and municipalities, business leaders, scientists,

community groups and environmental organizations to protect and restore the Great Lakes. I encourage all members of the House to stand with us and be true guardians of the Great Lakes. Thank you.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY JOURNÉE NATIONALE DES AUTOCHTONES

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very pleased to rise to acknowledge National Aboriginal Day on June 21, and I'm very pleased that a number of the people from Grassy Narrows who have made their way to Queen's Park have joined us in the Legislature.

This day is an opportunity to learn about the rich heritage and contributions of aboriginal people in Ontario and across Canada. It is my privilege as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs for Ontario to work daily in partnership with individuals and communities who are committed to the success of aboriginal people in Ontario.

J'ai rencontré des personnes autochtones qui contribuent grandement à notre province chaque jour.

I've met many aboriginal people who are making enormous contributions to this province every day.

1530

Mr. Speaker, aboriginal youth are the fastest-growing segment of our population and an important part of Ontario's future. More than 40% of aboriginal people in Ontario are under the age of 25. Only if aboriginal youth achieve their full potential can aboriginal communities—and Ontario—prosper as they should.

In February, six First Nations youth ambassadors travelled to the United Nations in order to voice this desire to reach their full potential. These inspiring youth shared their personal experiences and demonstrated to the UN how inequities in child welfare, education and health have affected their communities across Canada.

Je félicite ces jeunes ambassadeurs pour leur passion, leur vigueur et leur engagement envers le changement.

At last week's Truth and Reconciliation event in Toronto, Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux noted that, even in the face of obstacles and hardship, "We have not forgotten how to dance and we have not forgotten how to laugh." This was illustrated through a powerful performance by two young Inuit throat singers, Pamela Sevigny and Qatsuu Evis. The rhythmic humming and deep guttural sounds of throat singing resonated throughout the room, calling out the spirit of resilience and inspiration.

Our government's commitment to partnership has been demonstrated in many ways since we came to office in 2003. We've developed strategies like the aboriginal health and wellness strategy, Ontario's aboriginal education strategy, aboriginal affairs working group, the northern training partnership fund, and a First Nations strategic framework to end violence against women.

Strong partnerships between the government, First Nations, boards, schools, educators, families, students and aboriginal organizations are essential. All of these

are good things, and as I have said, we can use this moment to celebrate and acknowledge the good work that has been done.

Et nous avons une autre responsabilité devant cette Assemblée législative.

We have another responsibility in this Legislature. That responsibility is to understand the magnitude of what remains undone. That responsibility is to continue to confront the challenges of relationships that, throughout our shared history, have suffered from misunderstanding, conflict and even violence. That responsibility is to fully comprehend that the future strength of this province depends, at least in part, on the health and success of aboriginal youth and their families.

Monsieur le Président, la réalité est dure.

The facts are stark.

Over one quarter of aboriginal people in Ontario have not completed high school.

The unemployment rate for aboriginal people in Ontario is twice that of non-aboriginal Ontarians and can be much higher in remote First Nations communities.

Suicide rates for First Nations youth are five to six times higher than for non-aboriginal youth.

The life expectancy for aboriginal people in Ontario is eight to 10 years less than for non-aboriginal Ontarians.

In my time as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and indeed in my previous portfolios, I've had the opportunity to travel to First Nations communities and friendship centres across the province.

Les jeunes autochtones demandent que leurs voix soient entendues.

Aboriginal youth are demanding that their voices be heard, and elders are committed to supporting those young voices and are looking for avenues of economic development and, most particularly, educational success.

De nouveaux modèles éducatifs doivent être adoptés.

We have to adopt new models of education. We must have the courage to try economic mechanisms that have worked in other places, like Ontario's new aboriginal procurement pilot and Ontario's aboriginal business directory. In some cases, we must work to create made-in-Ontario solutions to intractable problems such as our work with the Anishinabek Nation Union of Ontario Indians on a new education model to improve outcomes.

We recognized, when we came to office, that the relationship between the Ontario government and aboriginal people had to change. We called the Ipperwash inquiry; we have addressed or are currently addressing those recommendations. We created a stand-alone Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and we take the responsibility for creating a new relationship very seriously, including provision of funding for the processes necessary to build stronger relationships.

Our responsibility as government and, I would suggest, the responsibility of all elected officials is to be honest about the challenges. It is political expediency of the worst kind to encourage and capitalize on division and despair.

I believe that the aboriginal children of this province have a right to expect that all the adults in their lives and

politicians at all levels of government will work together, push each other and find ways to set aside their partisanship to ensure that there are decent schools in all of their communities; that there is a curriculum in every school that tells the entire history of this land; that there is the same quality of healthy food, clean water and medical care available to every child of Ontario; and that the dream of being able to take part in Ontario's economic success is not a dream but a given expectation.

Our job as elected officials is to foster the climate for that success.

National Aboriginal Day is about building stronger relationships through awareness of the contributions of aboriginal people in Ontario and our roles and responsibilities as leaders and citizens. I invite all Ontarians to join me and thousands of other Canadians as we celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding achievements of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and our shared history.

Miigwetch. Nia:wen. Marsé. Nakurmiik. Merci. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Michael Chan: I rise today to recognize June as Ontario's second annual Italian Heritage Month.

Italian Canadians, nearly 900,000 strong, are one of Ontario's biggest immigrant communities. This House proclaimed Italian Heritage Month to recognize their achievements and celebrate their heritage.

The story of Italian Canadians is intertwined with the story of Ontario. Their skills, know-how, ambition and hard work are legendary.

Beginning in the late 19th century, many Italian Canadians were employed in mining and forestry and building railways. As cities grew, more immigrants found work constructing urban infrastructure, as well as homes and public buildings. Italian Canadians also laboured in the expanding manufacturing, commercial and service sectors.

As opportunities increased, Italian Canadians found success in field after field, from Johnny Lombardi in broadcasting to former Supreme Court Justice Frank Iacobucci to the late Vince Kerrio, the first Italian Canadian ever to serve as an Ontario cabinet minister.

Today, many, many Italian families have been here for decades, yet their traditions and culture endure. That's the wonder of Ontario.

During the month of June, let's enjoy the many Italian heritage events around the province. Let's remember the contributions of earlier generations and celebrate the great contributions Italian Canadians have made to our province. To all Italian Canadians, especially as the European Cup approaches, I say Forza Italia.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On a point of order—I apologize, Mr. Speaker. In my statement, I believe that I said some people from Grassy Narrows had come in; in

fact, the young people who are with us are from Fort Severn. I apologize for that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member has a point of order and can correct the record. Thank you.

Responses?

PROTECTION OF GREAT LAKES

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to take this opportunity to address the bill tabled today by the environment minister, the Great Lakes Protection Act.

The Great Lakes are an immense resource, containing a significant portion of the world's fresh water. They sustain a rich variety of plants and animals and are a direct source of drinking water for 33 million people, including 8.5 million Canadians.

The Great Lakes are also the foundation for billions of dollars of economic activity, supporting 25% of Canadians' agricultural capacity and 45% of Canadians' industrial capacity. Each year, the Great Lakes contribute \$180 billion in trade between Canada and the US and sustain hundreds of millions of dollars in commercial and recreational fishing activity.

But the Great Lakes story isn't all good news. Unfortunately, new and emerging challenges like invasive species, new chemical contaminants and the impacts of climate change have threatened the health of the Great Lakes. Different levels of government in Canada and the US have worked together to address these common challenges, but there's more work that needs to be done. Solving these challenges, however, should be carried out in a way that doesn't create unnecessary legislative overlap or excessive new regulations. The costs and benefits have to be carefully weighed when considering every new program, given Ontario's unsustainable financial situation.

So, Speaker, I'm looking forward to examining this bill, because protecting our drinking water and environment is crucial for the future of our province.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: National Aboriginal Day allows fellow Canadians to learn more about our Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples, their cultures and their significant contributions to the growth and development of our country. As a matter of fact, Speaker, my family has Métis status.

This year's National Aboriginal Day is being held on June 21, the first day of the summer solstice, a day that already holds special significance for many aboriginal groups and cultures.

1540

While the minister and the government stand up and recognize aboriginal peoples and applaud the great relationships they have with our First Nation communities in Ontario, what we're hearing is precisely the opposite. Contrary to what the minister is stating about building and strengthening partnerships with First Nations, this

government has actually been divisive in its approach to negotiations and consultations.

The government is currently engaged in the Algonquin land claim process, which encompasses a substantial area of 8.9 million acres in southern Ontario, including most of Algonquin Park. While the government says that they have undertaken a comprehensive consultation process, what we are hearing throughout this is just the opposite.

Those directly influenced by the details of the claim—the area municipalities, the fishing and hunting community, the tourism sector, the forestry sector—have not been involved in the consultation process whatsoever, other than to say it exists. Instead, the government has been holding closed meetings and negotiations and simply presenting general briefings with limited details to the interested stakeholders and jurisdictions, except to say that they are taking place.

Despite concerns brought to the minister's attention from groups and organizations, the McGuinty government has ignored input and concerns and is intent on moving ahead hastily towards an agreement in principle this fall.

Earlier today in the House, the minister had the audacity to claim that the public consultation to the OFAH is an ongoing and integral part of a major, major process.

What does it say about this government to boast about its record of dealing with the First Nations, when the truth is that conditions in First Nation communities are not improving, education for First Nation children is falling further behind and the secretive negotiations are causing further unrest, resentment and divisions between First Nations and non-aboriginal people in Ontario?

To quote Grand Chief Stan Beardy, there are three ways we can solve this problem, and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, the third way is that we can sit down and talk about it, and that's what we need to do. Miigwetch.

ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It is an honour to quickly speak to Italian Heritage Month. As Canadians of Italian heritage, we have a tremendous amount of pride, and for good reason. Let me tell you a little bit about my family's story as part of the wonderful Italian-Canadian community we have in North Bay.

My grandfather Antonnio Fava came over from Santo Stefano in 1924 with \$5 in his pocket. He settled in North Bay and spent most of his life with the Department of Highways. My most vivid memories are hunting with him, where he'd send me into the field to pick up the partridge.

My grandfather Vittorio Fedeli came over from Porto San Eppidio when he was 20. He settled in the Soo and spent his working life with Algoma Steel. He was known as a kind and generous man who loved to cook, garden and be with his family.

My dad, Hub Fedeli, has been gone almost three years, but everyone in North Bay would be quick to tell you he

was the patriarch of our Italian community. His beloved Davedi Club shines as a beacon of Italian pride and as a symbol of culture that embraces our heritage—especially if it involves food.

I'm proud to be a Canadian-Italian descendant and to have this opportunity to share some stories.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would like to start off by welcoming the students, parents and teachers of Fort Severn's Wasaho First Nation School, with us today. I think they must have just stepped out; long proceedings today.

On June 21, people across Canada gather to celebrate the rich culture of our first peoples. On behalf of the Ontario NDP caucus, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our First Nations, Métis and Inuit people for sharing their culture and their land with us, and I encourage everyone to join us in celebrating the traditions and wisdom they have shared with us.

While First Nations have shared much with us, including their land, we have not properly reciprocated. We live in a time when the scars of residential schools are still fresh. We like to pretend that these acts were decades ago, but the final residential school did not close until 1996, coincidentally the same year National Aboriginal Day was proclaimed.

In our error, we robbed generations of our first peoples of their culture, and we created wounds that have made many turn to alcohol and prescription drug abuse, which have become an epidemic in communities across Canada and across Ontario.

Conditions on many reserves mirror those of Third World countries, where housing is drastically short, infrastructure is crumbling, and schools and water treatment plants sit in disrepair.

Rather than the nation-to-nation relationship that we promised, we have shunned, pushed away and hid our first peoples on reserves where they have been kept away from the rest of the population.

Only when we find wealth, such as in the Ring of Fire, do governments begin paying attention. But that relationship, once again, does not live up to the nation-to-nation promise but is more a case of giving "take it or leave it" offers of table scraps to our forgotten peoples.

Even today, the people of Grassy Narrows and White Dog First Nation are gathered outside asking for the government to help address the long-term consequences of our irresponsibilities, yet rather than being welcomed in to enter into a discussion, they're left out in the cold.

June 21 is a day to celebrate the diverse and unique culture of our First Nations people, but every day we should remember the commitments we made, the crown made, to our First Peoples.

PROTECTION OF GREAT LAKES

Mr. Jonah Schein: I rise today to speak to the Great Lakes Protection Act.

We're blessed to live in this province with so much fresh water. The Great Lakes play a huge role to our ecology, to tourism, to our economy, and they provide drinking water to our province. But we know there are significant threats to the Great Lakes, from invasive species to destruction of shoreline habitats to pollution like algae and beach closures.

We also know that the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario has shown in his most recent report that the McGuinty government's record in protecting the Great Lakes has been spotty at best over eight years. He has noted:

- inadequate funding for cleaning up the Great Lakes;
- failure to control sewage overflows;
- lack of monitoring of phosphorus levels in the Great Lakes;
- insufficient protection of coastal wetlands from development and pollution;
- failure to reduce farm and livestock nitrogen and phosphorus runoff;
- a lack of consideration of the impact of the infrastructure plan on the Great Lakes;
- failure to educate the public about the importance of the Great Lakes.

In addition, the government has refused to listen to the over 100,000 people calling on them to put a stop to shipping radioactive steam generators on the Great Lakes.

We need comprehensive action on the Great Lakes, and it's overdue, Speaker. In the election platform, the NDP called for a Great Lakes act to ensure decisions by all ministries take into account and minimize impacts on the Great Lakes. We welcome this bill. We will be working to ensure that it is not only symbolic but that it sets strong targets, it's adequately resourced, and it's effective.

Speaker, given the government's watering down of protection of lands, lakes and rivers in the budget bill, we need to be especially vigilant that this is not a diversion or window dressing.

ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Rosario Marchese: New Democrats, including me and Cheri DiNovo, want to join the Minister of Culture in celebrating the second annual Italian Canadian heritage month. There will be many events organized this month throughout the whole of Ontario, so anybody who wants to take part can feel free to join in as we celebrate Italian Canadian pride.

I just want to take advantage of this 50 seconds to thank Michael Tibollo, who is the president of the National Congress of Italian-Canadians, without whom many of these activities would not happen, so I want to personally thank him for all the great work that he does on a regular basis, voluntarily, because he doesn't get paid for this.

The other one is to congratulate and thank Gianni Bardini, the consul general of Italy, who is finishing his

term shortly. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank him for his intelligence, for his sensitivity and for his commitment to Italian Canadians, including, especially, his ability to connect to us all. I congratulate his work and wish him well in the next phase of his career.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would beg your indulgence for an introduction. In the gallery today we have two former MPPs: Mr. Gord Miller from Norfolk in the 34th, and a friend—Gord, glad you're here; and Mr. Jack Wadell from Huron in the 29th, Huron-Middlesex in the 30th to 33rd, and then back to Huron in the 34th. Welcome.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AWARENESS WEEK

SEMAINE DE SENSIBILISATION AU HARCÈLEMENT SEXUEL

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I believe we have unanimous consent that each party be permitted to speak for up to five minutes in recognition of Sexual Harassment Awareness Week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I rise to recognize Sexual Harassment Awareness Week in Ontario.

Je prends la parole pour reconnaître la Semaine de sensibilisation au harcèlement sexuel en Ontario. Il y a cinq ans, notre gouvernement a proclamé la première semaine de juin Semaine de sensibilisation au harcèlement sexuel.

1550

Speaker, the term “sexual harassment” did not emerge until the 1970s, when the voices of women’s advocates and court decisions in jurisdictions around the world began to reach a tipping point.

In 1989, in one of the leading Supreme Court of Canada decisions on sexual harassment, Chief Justice Dickson wrote, “When sexual harassment occurs in the workplace, it is an abuse of both economic and sexual power.... [S]exual harassment in the workplace attacks the dignity and self-respect of the victim both as an employee and as a human being.”

This decision was a major turning point as it gave legal recognition of sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination.

Here in Ontario, Sexual Harassment Awareness Week has its origins in the memory of one woman who represents too many others. For years, Chatham resident Theresa Vince was the victim of persistent sexual harassment perpetrated by her supervisor. On June 2, 1996, this same supervisor murdered Theresa Vince, and this week we mark the tragic anniversary of Ms. Vince’s death and honour her life by bringing awareness to the issue of sexual harassment.

Sexual Harassment Awareness Week exists to increase public awareness, foster change in attitudes and behaviour and to prevent another tragedy from occurring.

In 2010, our government took action and strengthened Ontario’s Occupational Health and Safety Act to bring in more protection with respect to violence and harassment. Employers in Ontario are now required to develop workplace violence and harassment policies and programs and are responsible for responding to sexual harassment.

Protéger les femmes au travail est une étape importante, mais il reste encore plus à faire pour voir à ce que nous vivions toutes et tous sans crainte de harcèlement et de violence.

At its extreme, women like Theresa have lost their lives because of sexual harassment. However, for most women who experience it, sexual harassment does not make the nightly news. Rather, it takes an insidious form whereby each and every day women dread the thought of setting foot in their workplace. These women are deprived of their basic entitlement to earn a living. They’re deprived of a safe space to ensure their own economic security. For women who have suffered sexual harassment, they know first-hand how gross an abuse of economic and sexual power this act can be.

Our government will not tolerate sexual harassment, and I’m proud to be part of a government that has taken action to better the lives of women on so many fronts: through our comprehensive domestic violence action plan, which is helping women and children to live free from the fear of domestic violence; and through our sexual violence action plan, which is working to prevent sexual violence and improve supports for survivors. And now we have passed the Accepting Schools Act, which makes it clear that bullying, and in particular harassment based on sex, is not acceptable in our schools.

Along with this, we’re teaching healthy, equal relationships to our young people through a range of school-based programs, recognizing that attitudes and behaviours formed at a young age are immensely important.

Through our strong public education campaigns, such as Make It Our Business, we continue to raise awareness about how we can all contribute to a safe workplace.

And that is a part of what former Liberal member Pat Hoy wanted to accomplish in declaring this week as Sexual Harassment Awareness Week. He knew the importance of raising awareness when he said that “sexual harassment interferes with a woman’s safety, her dignity and her equality.”

I would like to be able to say that since sexual harassment was given its name in the 1970s, or following the 1989 Supreme Court case, we no longer have to contend with the issue in 2012. Unfortunately, that is not the reality. Regardless of how far we have come, sexual harassment is still present in our workplaces, et cela signifie que nous devons encore faire plus pour sensibiliser à cette question et pour prendre des mesures en la matière.

Everyone—government, educators, parents, students, employers, managers and colleagues—has a role to play. All of us can help to build a healthy and respectful workplace. All of us can learn how to recognize the warning signs of sexual harassment and how to respond. It is incumbent on each and every one of us to remain vigilant when it comes to sexual harassment, not just during the first week of June but each and every day. Only by working together in a positive environment can we eliminate sexual harassment both in the workplace and in society, and when we have done that, we will have made our province stronger and we will have accomplished something we can all be proud of.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the PC Party and our leader, Tim Hudak, and as the PC critic for women's issues to mark Sexual Harassment Awareness Week.

"Harassment" is a word that does not have a shred of happiness associated with it, especially when it is prefaced with the word "sexual."

To some people, sexual harassment is a vague concept they have heard about but do not really understand, but for others it can represent a life-altering event that has changed them so dramatically that they never fully recover from it.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is severe or pervasive and, when it occurs in a workplace setting, can affect working conditions and create a hostile work environment, and sometimes even lead to death, as the minister stated.

The most recent sexual harassment statistics for Canada show that young women are the most likely to be sexually harassed, with 10% of women 18 to 24 years of age having experienced sexual harassment in the workplace within the previous 12 months. As many as 90% of Canadian women have admitted that they have experienced this type of harassment at some point during their working lives.

Sexual harassment can occur anywhere at any time: at work, at home, at school or in a social situation.

I want to emphasize that while some forms of harassment happen predominantly against women, no one is immune. Sexual harassment can be perpetrated on or by anyone. Typical scenarios are co-worker to co-worker, a supervisor harassing a subordinate, a subordinate harassing a supervisor, men harassing women, women harassing men, same-sex harassment with men harassing men and women harassing women, sexual orientation harassment, or third party harassment such as customers and suppliers.

This week is an important reminder to both men and women of why this issue is of grave concern and to stress that sexual harassment has no place in our society.

Whatever its shape or form, the bottom line is that sexual harassment is never okay. It is against the law. It is against the very moral fabric of our province and our country to tolerate such acts.

Fortunately, the victims of sexual harassment do not have to be alone. In my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha

Lakes-Brock, Kawartha/Haliburton Victim Services offers victim crisis assistance and referral services for the residents of the city of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton county, in partnership with police, emergency services and community agencies. They provide immediate onsite assistance and referral services to victims of various crimes, including sexual harassment. Organizations like this, in communities across the province, and staffed primarily by well-trained volunteers, perform an invaluable service for victims and their families. Their work is to be commended and needs our ongoing support.

Sexual Harassment Awareness Week is, as the name suggests, a vehicle for educating people about the impact that actions, both verbal and physical, can have on other people. We need to be cognizant of our relationships with other people to ensure that we are not inflicting psychological, emotional and even physical harm, whether intentional or otherwise.

Education is the key to understanding, and understanding is the key to eliminating the problem.

I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to speak on this important issue today. Thank you.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, to speak about Sexual Harassment Awareness Week. It's interesting that this follows on the passage of Bill 13, because when you think about the homophobic and also gender-based bullying that has been going on in our schools, one of the principal components of that is targeting boys who act like girls. There's misogyny behind it. There seems to be something wrong still, in the atmosphere in our schools, to be feminine—to be effeminate or to be a girl.

Quite frankly, I take exception to some of the numbers we've heard here today, because I've never met a woman—never met a woman—who has not been the subject of sexual harassment at some point in her life. I remember running to school being chased by boys, as a little girl. This is not uncommon. This is what girls go through in schools. Gender is one of the main reasons that kids get bullied in school. I wanted to put that on the record.

We also rise, of course, in memory of Theresa Vince, who in 1996 was murdered by her boss after being sexually harassed for years, and Lori Dupont, murdered in 2005 by an ex-boyfriend after being harassed for years in her workplace.

I'll say two things are critical to combat sexual harassment. Women need to be able to speak out about it and they need to be able to afford to get away from it—those two components. And those still, unfortunately, are lacking in the province of Ontario. Women still make 71% of what men make, and we're not enforcing our own pay equity laws. Women don't have access to daycare; this is also a problem. And victim services: For example, just down here on College Street, the pre-eminent responders to domestic violence or harassment actually have not had a raise in their funding in 20 years, and the funding per victim has gone down. It's about a fifth of

what it was 20 years ago. So there's not enough money there for those who would help the victims.

1600

Of course, men play a role here too, and I want to give a shout-out to the White Ribbon Campaign, founded by the late Jack Layton, a phenomenal organization that really raises awareness. The men in that campaign, that really is all-year-round, pledge two things. They pledge never to be a perpetrator of harassment or violence, and they also pledge not to be silent in the face of it, but to speak up for the victims. I do believe—and I'm speaking to my benchmate here—that younger men are getting the message, that younger men really are improving in that regard, so there's hope. It's because of those folk, who have done so much work for so long, that there is hope.

I also want to quote Nancy Hutchison from the OFL, because there was mention of Bill 168. She's the OFL secretary-treasurer. She said: "Bill 168 promised to protect workers against workplace violence and harassment, but more needs to be done to strengthen the legislation.... Victims need to have rights and know about them before they are able to exercise them, but they also need to be given the confidence that the law will be enforced and their rights will be vigorously protected."

It has been two years since that bill was passed and we supported it, but there has been no campaign to raise public awareness about it. Nobody knows about it. Lots of workplaces don't know about it. It has not been enforced either. In fact, only one in 100 employers ever sees anybody from the Ministry of Labour to enforce anything. But, certainly, this has not been enforced either. If people don't know about it, if women don't know about it, if men don't know about it, it won't work. And if it's not enforced, it won't work. So, yes, it was a step forward, but again, we have to look at the implementation. We've had two years.

What is the Ontario Federation of Labour calling for?

—stronger, more effective and more timely enforcement;

—strong regulations on training and consultation with workplace joint health and safety committees;

—an expansion of the Employment Standards Act definition for "compassionate leave," to help women;

—provisions in the Human Rights Code, Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Employment Standards Act guaranteeing abused women the right to workplace accommodation, including the right to alternative work, flexible hours and job transfers; and

—a multi-language public education campaign to ensure women workers know their workplace rights and where to go for enforcement.

These are critical factors to keep women safe.

So again, two things: Women need to be able to speak out about it and to be able to afford to get away from it. Those two criteria have still not been dealt with in the province of Ontario, and we in the NDP won't rest until they are.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

BAITFISH INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Protecting Ontario's Live Baitfish Industry and the Rights of Ontario Anglers."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources has banned the harvesting of frogs and crayfish, imports of leeches, and the use of organic bait in some areas, infringing the rights of Ontario anglers; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources has further restricted the rights of Ontario anglers by imposing inflexible restrictions on the live baitfish industry after receiving confirmation of a new outbreak of viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS); and

"Whereas a six-month delay by the Ministry of Natural Resources confirming a new outbreak of VHS to the live baitfish industry and the inflexible restrictions imposed on the bait industry's movement of live bait in Ontario has caused the live baitfish industry to suffer significant financial losses; and

"Whereas the live baitfish industry has tried to work with the Ministry of Natural Resources to create a sustainable and effective response to outbreaks of VHS to protect the live baitfish industry, the rights of Ontario anglers and Ontario's natural environment;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Natural Resources recognize, and work with, the live baitfish industry to ensure a viable quality baitfish produce for the anglers of Ontario."

It's signed by hundreds of people all over the province of Ontario.

ONTARIO PLACE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now petition time, so I will recognize the member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you for remembering, Mr. Speaker.

"Whereas the Ontario government has closed most of Ontario Place to plan the 'revitalization' of the 96-acre site;

"Whereas Ontario Place was dedicated to the 'People of Ontario—Past, Present and Future,' when it was opened in 1971;

"Whereas Ontario Place was turning the corner when the government pulled the rug out from under it;

"Whereas, after decades of neglect, an investment of \$10.8 million in new rides and refurbished attractions resulted in an 89% increase in attendance in 2011;

"Whereas revenues from ride ticket sales, concession sales, Play All Day passes and Cinesphere tickets all went up; and

"Whereas closing the park now is a waste of the money invested less than 12 months ago;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Ontario Place must be kept open while the revitalization plans are being developed and the park must remain a public, family-oriented space for all Ontarians to enjoy now and into the future."

I support these 1,400 people who signed this petition.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from young people in the Waterloo and Wellington area.

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

I agree with this and will affix my name.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt;

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and Oak Ridges moraine;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries;

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent

contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt."

I've affixed my signature to this and given it to page Sherry.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Kenora-Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. It's nice to see you back in the chair.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north's economy; and

"Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

"Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the planned cancellation of the Northlander and the sale of the rest of the assets of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission be halted immediately."

I support this and have affixed my signature.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with Stavroula.

1610

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Ted Arnett: I have a petition signed by hundreds of my constituents, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government has initiated the GTA West Corridor Study; and

"The study has identified a possible route for a new highway through the town of Halton Hills, which is known as Alternative 4-3; and

"The province of Ontario has a total debt of at least \$236.3 billion, and a deficit this year of at least \$16 billion, and a diminished fiscal capacity to build new highways like this one; and

"The councils of the town of Halton Hills and the region of Halton have formally expressed serious concerns about Alternative 4-3; and

"Many Halton Hills residents have objected in writing to Alternative 4-3, because of the impact it would have on our local environment, heritage and historical sites, good-quality farmland, community identity, and property values;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Transportation should announce that Alternative 4-3 of the GTA West Corridor Study has been removed from further consideration."

I would urge the minister to announce that publicly.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to read a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have been paying over millions in extra charges on their hydro bills to help retire the debt. The amount collected to date, as per the Auditor General's report, is \$8.7 billion, but the amount owing was \$7.8 billion;

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking, where is the money being invested?

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking why this was not addressed at the time the debt was" retired;

"Whereas electrical rates have increased with the new creation of green energy coming online, to include solar and wind, refurbishment of nuclear plants and deregulation of Hydro One;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows to obtain answers to the following questions:

"How much of the debt remains?

"When will it be eliminated from Ontario taxpayers' hydro bills?"

I will present the petition to Anthonie.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from Barb Sheppard, who lives at 519 Sunnydale Place in wonderful Waterloo, Ontario. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;"

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

Mr. Speaker, I will affix my signature to it.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present this petition.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints in the areas of hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

"Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to give it to Tameen. I'm going to affix my signature. Tameen is going to take it to the table.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to present this petition on behalf of students from the Kitchener-Waterloo area, Cambridge and also from Toronto:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;"

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will give this to page Sherry.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario slots-at-racetracks program has, for over a decade, provided mutual benefit to the province of Ontario and the horse racing industry; and

"Whereas the government has announced the cancellation of the slots-at-racetracks program, jeopardizing the future of the horse racing and breeding industry in Ontario at the cost of thousands of jobs and \$2 billion in economic activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario work with the horse racing industry to reinstate and improve the slots-at-

racetracks program with its revenue-sharing agreement to sustain and grow the horse racing industry to the benefit of our communities."

I agree with this and affix my signature to it.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas based on current, exhaustive and peer-reviewed research, more than 95% of climate scientists conclude that greenhouse gas emissions from human activity are responsible for most of the increase in global average temperature over the past 200 years;

"Compelling scientific evidence indicates that a return from the current concentration of more than 392 parts per million of carbon dioxide, CO₂, in the atmosphere to 350 ppm CO₂ or less is necessary to avoid dangerous interference in the climate system;

"Further increases in global temperatures pose imminent and substantial dangers to human health, the natural environment, agriculture, the economy, public safety and national security and an unacceptable and unnecessary risk of catastrophic impacts to human civilization;

"It is our moral, global and intergenerational duty to put measures in place that will return the concentration of greenhouse gases to 350 ppm CO₂ and help communities adapt to a changing climate, while diversifying the economy in Ontario and the nation, creating local jobs and improving health during the transition to a new energy economy, based on conservation and renewable energy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Give this problem its immediate and fullest attention and create policies that support innovative solutions;

"Commit to the most current science-based greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets;

"Work with the Canadian government and other provinces to create a Canadian energy strategy which focuses on transitioning to a new energy economy, based on conservation and renewable energy. Facilitate this transition through the Green Energy Act, and by providing incentives to improve energy efficiencies, and investing in public transit and other low-carbon infrastructure and technologies."

I support this petition, put my name to it and send it up with Sam.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(AIR AMBULANCES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES
(SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 3, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The last time we debated this, the member from Cambridge had 18 minutes. He'll lead off.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I note that the last time I spoke to this bill was May 3, 2012, which was far more than a month ago. One of the reasons why it's taken so long to get to this point is simply because, first of all, the government didn't adhere to our request to have a select committee on Ornge; and secondly, they didn't amend the terms of reference of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to a satisfactory level. Then they ended up, of course, in an agreement where they decided they would extend some hearings into Ornge, and here we are today, debating it, one month later—one month lost in terms of debate time for this bill, one month lost in debate time for all other bills as well. It's the government who failed, frankly, to move this legislation forward—legislation, I have to add, that they say is very important to the future of our air ambulance service in the province of Ontario.

1620

Mr. Speaker, as you would know, prior to entering politics I was a university professor. You would know that because I know that one of my former students actually works for you. It's interesting that he works for you and his brother works for the PC caucus. I don't know how this worked out in that family. I'd certainly want to be there at the family dinner when this happens.

Mr. Speaker, when we were talking about public policy when I was teaching at the university—I will impart that knowledge to members of this House—one of the things that we liked to do before we entered into a discussion of public policy was to actually decide that we have a problem to address. I think most people would acknowledge that when it comes to our air ambulance service in the province of Ontario, there is a problem. But the one thing that we haven't really addressed is the full scope of that problem. I would submit to this House that we actually have to understand that full scope. That's why we requested a special committee, to get to the bottom of Ornge, to find out the depth and the extent of the problem. Before we come up with legislation to address those concerns, we have to actually understand that scope. So, in many ways, I think there's information that has been uncovered and continues to be uncovered as to the size and scope of the problems at Ornge that would very well be necessary to address in a piece of legislation like this.

Frankly, we haven't got to that problem yet; we haven't got to the bottom of what's happened at Ornge. I think we have to do that in order to proceed in a very—in a manner that is—

Interjection.

Mr. Rob Leone: I noticed the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke almost fell, so it caught my attention there; it caught the corner of my eye.

But we have to understand the full scope of the problem before we can address it.

I want to address something very important here. I would say that members of the PC caucus—in fact, members of the opposition, if I can be so bold—are not acting, as the government would have us believe, in a partisan interest. We are interested in the public interest, and seeing to the public interest is making sure that we fix all the problems at Ornge—all the problems. That's what our interest is: Our interest is in the public interest. Frankly, I think that it would do everyone a good service to not essentially impugn motive to other members with respect to what we are doing here. We want to get to the bottom of it. We want to make sure that this legislation reflects the interest that is at hand.

I also have to note that there have been a couple of occasions where members of this House have had an opportunity to debate things that are relevant to Ornge. For example, in one instance, the member for Newmarket—Aurora, co-sponsored by the member for Nickel Belt, wanted to create a select committee on Ornge. There was a vote on that, and in that vote, I have to say that members on the governing side decided not to support that motion, even though it was the will of the House. That select committee was not made. They voted against what we're doing with Ornge.

I also note that on March 1, the member for Dufferin—Caledon introduced a motion that would protect whistle-blowers—whistle-blower protection—those people who were coming to our party and to the other opposition members with information with respect to what's happening at Ornge. We had debated the lengths that this House should go to protect those witnesses. We had a vote in this House. That vote in this House again showed that members of the opposition supported the protection of whistle-blowers, and members of the governing side voted against it. So we've had two votes on Ornge and Ornge-related activities where members of the opposition have decided to support those activities, those motions, and the government refused to do so.

I find it very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that today, before this House, we have Bill 50, which essentially is the government's response to some of the problems that we find at Ornge. They are here today saying, "Listen to us. We have the solutions. Vote with me." Mr. Speaker, this is a minority Parliament, a Parliament that often sees that we need a little bit of give and take. The government has shown no willingness to listen to some of the things that we have said with respect to Ornge and the votes that we have had. Now, today, they are asking us to support what is Bill 50.

We have, as noted by several members on this side of the House who have spoken to Bill 50, a number of issues with what's happening with this bill and some of the deficiencies that we see with it. I'm going to address those, but before I do so, Mr. Speaker, I do have to remind this House that the reason we're here, the reason that all members are actually sitting here debating this bill, is because there is a mess to be cleaned up. Now, I

know the government doesn't want to admit that they had any play in that, and that they are certainly interested in making sure that we don't expose any more wrongdoings, if those wrongdoings do in fact exist. But the reality of it is that it's the government's responsibility to administer public services on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario. It's the government's responsibility to ensure public safety. It's the opposition's responsibility to hold the government accountable. It's the opposition's responsibility to ensure that government transparency is adhered to. That is, in essence, what we're doing, what we're talking about, here in this House today, about that role and our role as members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition in holding the government to account for what is, for no better way of explaining it, mismanagement of our air ambulance services.

That mismanagement is not a categorization that members of this House have simply given the air ambulance service; it is a categorization that comes from the Auditor General himself. I think we have to acknowledge the fact that the auditor has outlined a series of problems with Ornge and our air ambulance service in the province of Ontario that speaks of the kind of mismanagement that desperately needs some adjustment, refinement and a lot of change.

As members of our party have said consistently, despite the claims by the government that change is before us, what we have in fact seen is very little change. That is something that we find very troubling. That's why, Mr. Speaker, we have continually asked for a change in leadership—not just a change in leadership at Ornge, but a change in leadership in cabinet with respect to the file of health and long-term care. I say that with the greatest respect to our front-line workers, who work day in and day out trying to protect the public, trying to protect people who are in need, who are ailing, who have serious medical conditions that need immediate attention. We respect those front-line workers. We want them to work in the best of working conditions, because it's important that they do that in order to keep the public safe.

We are very concerned, Mr. Speaker, that the government hasn't really heard that message of mismanagement, and that's something that we need to address.

One of the things that Bill 50 doesn't talk about in any great detail addresses the motion that was put forth by the member for Dufferin-Caledon with respect to whistle-blowing. Whistle-blowing is a very important thing that we have to protect, and witnesses have to feel free to come forward so they can provide information to whatever committee is investigating their situation, free from reprisals for actually bringing that information forward. It's very important that we have that.

1630

This bill, Mr. Speaker, does not provide across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers. It imposes limits on which individuals are protected and who they can approach with information. The legislation, in our opinion, ought to provide a formal process, through the Ombudsman, that ensures proper protection and follow-up.

On March 1, during the debate on the member for Dufferin-Caledon's motion with respect to whistle-blowing, and on a point that this bill does not address—or does not address, obviously, to the liking of members on this side of the House—I made a few comments with respect to whistle-blowing that I think bear repeating. I quoted a gentleman named Shaun Young, who has done a lot of work on whistle-blowing. He suggests that, “At its root, the act of whistle-blowing is concerned with responsibility and accountability”—again, Mr. Speaker, “responsibility” and “accountability” being words that should be part of our normal discourse in this place. That's what we have to ensure. We have to ensure responsibility and accountability—responsibility for the actions that happen in government; accountability: being able to tell members of this Legislature what has happened. That's what “being accountable” means. “Taking responsibility” means that you take some ownership of the problems. At the end of the day, responsibility and accountability are what is at the heart of whistle-blowing as well. So: “responsibility and accountability, with ensuring that those charged with acting on behalf of the best interests of others do so, and that their failure to satisfy effectively that duty will generate negative consequences for them.” This is what Shaun Young continues to say.

He goes on to quote Fred Alford, who defines a whistle-blower as “anyone who speaks out in the name of the public good within ... [an] organization.”

Young continues and suggests that, “More precisely, ‘whistle-blowing’ is typically understood to refer to the act of disclosing information about a ‘wrongdoing’ to someone who can help ensure that the wrongdoing ceases and that its” proprietor “is held accountable for his or her action(s).”

Mr. Speaker, I think that when we're talking about what's happened with Ornge, this is exactly what we're looking for. We're making sure that the proprietor—the perpetrator; sorry; I have to correct that—is held accountable for his or her actions. That's what we're looking for. We're looking for somebody to be held accountable for what they have done, and if there was wrongdoing, that we at the very least get an explanation of what has gone on. It would be helpful if we also had an apology. It would also be helpful, perhaps, if there was some other act, some other action—perhaps even losing a job—as a result of harming the public interest.

We're very concerned that this bill that seeks to correct all the problems that are before us with Ornge—we have a problem with respect to the fact that the people who are going to be coming forward and talking about what has happened here aren't going to be protected.

If this bill passes second reading, Mr. Speaker, it's going to go to committee. When it goes to committee, I imagine that the committee will be seeking deputations from a variety of witnesses. If those witnesses come forward, to what extent are they going to be protected? To what extent are they going to be free in terms of trying to offer the information that the committee would need to

make sure that they make informed choices if they like the bill or if they want to amend the bill? These are certainly aspects of the bill that we would like to see move forward, and I think that that's where we would like to see some more work be done.

I also want to point out the section that speaks to the ability to appoint inspectors. The bill says that cabinet may appoint special investigators to investigate a designated air ambulance service. What the bill doesn't mention, Mr. Speaker, is that the minister already has those powers. The bill is an attempt, in my view, to divert attention to the real issues, saying that powers don't exist where they do, using that as an attempt to say, "I couldn't have acted earlier." I have a serious issue with that. As a minister of the crown who is in charge of that ministry, who is in charge of dispensing public services on behalf of the government, saying that powers don't exist where they do and using that explanation as a way to say, "I didn't do anything," or "I couldn't have done anything," I think is an act of trying to shy away from taking the responsibility that is necessary in this case, with Ornge.

The reason why I say the minister has the power already is, if you refer to the original performance agreement with Ornge, article 15 of that original performance agreement already allows the minister to have the power to intervene—the power to appoint inspectors, as this bill suggests. Those powers were already there.

If we really believe in the tenets of what we're supposed to be doing here, that the opposition is supposed to be holding the government to account, to request some information where necessary, I think we have to be very clear with respect to what is actually in the bill, and put that next to what already exists through other agreements, through other statutes.

In my view, I believe that the health minister could have acted earlier, should have acted earlier, must have acted earlier. It's one of the reasons why members on this side of the House have continually asked for explanations and, where those explanations do not exist and did not exist, that we have asked for the resignation of that minister.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, I stand up to talk to Bill 50 today, to suggest that there are serious problems and to also suggest the government should not—should not—abdicate its responsibility with respect to the air ambulance service in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I sat here and I enjoyed the comments from my colleague from Cambridge. There are a lot of good things he did say there.

I came here with the idea that we need to really get things done and move things along. The one key thing that he highlighted was responsibility and accountability, which I totally agree with. We need to find out exactly what has happened with this.

He referred to what has happened with Ornge as a mess. I just want to help him out on that. My son's bedroom over the weekend was a mess; this was a lot

more than a mess. This was more of a tornado that kept returning and returning and returning, causing more damage, more collateral damage, and nobody seemed to want to stop it.

The words that are key here are responsibility and accountability. However, we can't hold Ontarians hostage. We have to get through this phase. We have to get through to the next opportunity in order to start curing the mess, start bringing this tornado under control, to start answering a lot of those questions. We need to get to that point so we can have those discussions.

I fully agree with the member from Cambridge. We have to get to the bottom of this mess: how it was investigated, how it was permitted to go forward. The effectiveness of this bill is really clouding what the actual root cause of this problem was. It obscures the role that the minister had absolute opportunity to get involved and stop this. It was her choice not to look at it. It was her choice to look away.

1640

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the member for Cambridge.

Just a couple of comments: First of all, any committee of this Legislature, be it for the purpose of hearing input on legislation, be it like public accounts—anybody who appears as a witness before that committee enjoys exactly the same parliamentary privilege that we enjoy as members, so in fact there is protection for people who come forward to talk about the legislation or at public accounts. Secondly, the current Ambulance Act does not contain the power for the minister to appoint an investigator, which can then lead on to appoint a supervisor to actually take over an ambulance service that is as far off the rails as Ornge. What the amendments in this bill do, in part, is give the minister the authority to appoint a supervisor following an investigation—and that authority is not there.

Now, one of the things that has happened is that in fact every single Liberal minister who has had the ability to interact with Ornge has appeared before the public accounts committee. At the invite of the public accounts committee, every single Liberal minister has appeared. The one minister who had responsibility but who has not responded to an invitation to appear is Minister Clement, the Conservative minister, and what we heard today was that—

Mr. John Yakabuski: He didn't invent Ornge.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Well, I don't know. We started—they started at Ornge billing his wife at Fasken's for bills his wife—

Mr. John Yakabuski: What's she got to do with it?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Well, she was the lawyer who was lobbying him.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. It just ended at the right time, but I would suggest that we

go through the Chair and not have a debate across the floor. Thank you.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my privilege and offer a few remarks in regard to my colleague from Cambridge. He was obviously a highly regarded professor prior to coming here, and not surprisingly, he did his homework and presented a lot of solid facts for us all to contemplate here today.

What I took from his comments is that we in our PC caucus certainly do fully value the efforts of the front-line care providers, and a big part of what he brought out was the need for whistle-blower protection in this bill if it is to go forward. We need people to be able to freely come forward. This morning we had Mr. Kidd in the audience, and he also appeared in front of committee. Now, that gentleman actually resigned. He brought his concerns forward, saw nothing happening to change it, and he decided of his own volition to get out. So he didn't really need the whistle-blower protection. But that speaks very highly to the amount of concern that he had with something that was such a boondoggle, such a scheme that was going on. You know, he brought those concerns forward, and nothing happened—and that was a couple of years ago.

The concern I have is that we're still not hearing of much action truly. You know, they flipped a few board members out, they've changed a few of the chairs around at the top, but most of the people who were involved in the scheme are still there—and that's very concerning for all of us.

He suggested an apology was needed, and I've said that in the last week as well. The Premier still has not stepped up to those families who have been impacted by this poor service delivery and offered an apology. That needs to be done. He spoke about action required, and this bill is just, again, moving more paperwork. We don't need more paperwork; we need less paperwork. We need to give action to the people who need it so that the care is provided to the families that we all come to this place every day to represent.

He suggested that it diverts attention, and I think that's exactly what the strategy was: "Let's throw another piece of paper, let's get another bill into the mill, so that we don't have to really address the concerns and be frank with the people of Ontario, to say we messed up." As one of my colleagues typically says daily, "If you mess up, fess up," and they need to do that.

This is very serious. We need to get to the bottom of it and we need to not give up until we get to the facts, the root of the problem, so that we can put protocols in place so that another Ornge fiasco never happens again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a pleasure to respond to some of the comments of the member from Cambridge. This is the second time that I've had the opportunity to listen to him speak regarding whistle-blowing, and he used some very good references. Also, someone talked about Trevor Kidd, who came this morning to the Ornge review.

Mr. Rob Leone: That was your constituent.

Mr. John Vanthof: His father is my constituent.

Whistle-blowing also has to have a culture of, someone has to want to listen to the whistle. There are so many people who have come forward to this committee, and what we've heard, including in Mr. Kidd's testimony today—quite frankly, no one was listening or no one wanted to listen. Perhaps that's what we're hearing.

Even in the hearing today, it was insinuated that Mr. Kidd was somehow putting people in front of health care because he didn't want to reveal names of people. There seems to be a culture of blaming people instead of wanting—here was a front-line worker who quit his job for what he believed and who came to this committee and was willing to be grilled, and he was grilled. Instead of asking for information—in some cases, he was grilled about this name or that name. It's more of a blame game than actually "Let's listen to the problem."

It was pointed out with G50 that, as the member for Cambridge said, the whistle-blowing is very—MPPs and the press. You're not covered if you talk to those under Bill 50. Well, those are the ones who brought the Ornge scandal out. So we've got a long way to go with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Cambridge has two minutes.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the member for Algoma–Manitoulin; the member for Guelph; the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, my great colleague; and the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

I want to address a couple of points made in those comments. We're not talking about a couple of brown envelopes here. We're talking about boxes full of information that are handed in secrecy to members of the opposition, to their offices. If that doesn't speak to fear of bringing information forward, I don't know what does. This isn't a matter of a piece of paper. This is huge boxes of information. Pretty soon, we're going to need a moving truck to get this information from our members' offices right here to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: An Ornge van.

Mr. Rob Leone: Perhaps in an Ornge van or maybe even a helicopter. The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane makes some great points here in terms of how these boxes could be transported here to the Legislature.

This is a very serious matter, and there is a lot of information out there that's being transferred to us in secrecy. That speaks to a fear of reprisal, and that kind of fear of reprisal is exactly what I was trying to address with respect to that.

I have a problem, Mr. Speaker, that every time there's some problem over there on that side of the House, their first resort is to blame the Harper government, blame the federal government: They didn't implement bills, or they did something or they didn't do something. They keep talking about all these ministers at the federal level, when they are the government of Ontario. They are the cabinet. They dispense public services to the people. This is just an abdication of responsibility that, frankly, sickens me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to this bill, G50, the Ambulance Amendment Act, 2012.

As many of my colleagues have stated, there are many elements to this bill which are missing. While the bill allows cabinet to appoint representatives to the board of designated air ambulance service providers and appoint a supervisor or special investigator, I am concerned that Ornge will not be subject to freedom of information.

The Ontario Ombudsman will not have oversight of this agency. The lack of accountability is something I take issue with. We should be looking at expanding what the Ombudsman's role is, which will bring that oversight, but it's something that is very much lacking in this particular bill.

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Although this bill allows the minister to issue directives to air ambulance, I fail to see how that will change things that have been done and the way they were done in the past.

The fact that the Minister of Health introduced this bill on the same day the Auditor General released his damning report on Ornge seems more like a reactive approach. It appears more of an attempt to change the channel, but the bill still falls very short of being able to accomplish this.

It has been clear that the Premier and the Minister of Health for months have been trying to push the blame on everyone else—everyone else—but themselves for the issue of Ornge. Again, today, during question period fingers were being pointed across to the opposition; fingers were being pointed across to the third party. But when you point a finger, let's remember that there are three other ones that are directed toward yourself, and we should be looking and taking that responsibility and being accountable for the decisions or lack of decisions that have not been made with this.

The Liberals have been trying to use the fact that Ornge was a federally incorporated entity. However, I don't see how this prevented them from providing the necessary oversight to avoid this mess. After all, Ontario's hospitals are federally incorporated, and this has no impact on oversight whatsoever.

This is an opportunity to create a bill that could prevent such disregard for taxpayers' dollars and ensure that it doesn't happen again. I am unclear as to how this bill will actually do much to prevent us from seeing this, time and time again. Blaming the opposition for this mess is not productive. Creating useful legislation is, and absolutely must be, something we're working toward.

If this government can't even admit that they were wrong, that they had a role to play in creating this disaster, how can the general public and how can we trust that they are trying to find ways to actually assure Ontarians that this will not happen again?

As I said from the start, someone needs to be responsible and we need transparency. Rather than creating a

bill that gives us just that, the Liberals have tabled one in which Ornge continues to not be subject to freedom-of-information requests. How can we trust a government who is clearly continuing to move forward with no transparency? When organizations know that they are under freedom of information, they will undoubtedly behave in a different manner. One would think they would do so. So why are we proceeding in this manner? Why are we doing this? Yes, we are talking about the mismanagement of money—not just a little bit of money; a lot of money: millions of dollars, spent without proper responsibility and accountability; taxpayers' money. This is a huge concern alone.

However, what is more worrisome is that air ambulance deals with life-and-death situations. When things go wrong, families deserve to know the facts and have closure. Depriving these grieving families from getting this information is unacceptable. Providing the information and the details would bring some type of credibility to this bill, but again, it lacks that provision. Ontarians would agree that organizations such as Ornge need to be under the mandate of the Ombudsman.

Vous savez, le gouvernement a présentement la chance devant eux de corriger ce problème, de vraiment adresser le problème, de retourner un niveau de crédibilité à ce gouvernement et puis à notre système de santé, parce qu'il y a plusieurs questions qui sont posées dans le public en général. Il y a plusieurs doutes qui étaient aussi soulevés de ce gouvernement, en s'asseyant là et en regardant l'opposition et puis en créant une idée que c'est le problème de quelqu'un d'autre—de blâmer les autres partis, de blâmer les autres gens, et de ne pas prendre la responsabilité de ce gouvernement, des décisions qu'ils ont choisi de ne pas faire. La décision de regarder envers une autre avenue, la décision de ne pas vraiment établir et regarder aux problèmes essentiels, ceci, c'est de quoi que ce gouvernement doit porter. Il doit prendre la décision et il doit prendre la responsabilité d'admettre que c'est leur problème et puis de prendre les premières étapes pour corriger le problème. C'est la seule façon qu'on peut vraiment adresser ce problème.

Rendre les droits nécessaires à l'ombudsman pour vraiment répondre aux questions, c'est aussi une étape qu'on devrait prendre, et ce projet de loi ne l'adresse pas.

Et puis, on doit poser la question à l'ombudsman aujourd'hui: s'il aurait eu le droit, s'il aurait eu la permission et l'habileté de regarder à ce problème, est-ce qu'on serait en train d'avoir cette conversation?

Had the Ombudsman had oversight, perhaps we would not have been here today, so why have the Liberals not taken this step? Clearly, they are not really serious about preventing similar catastrophes in the future.

In Algoma-Manitoulin, in much of northern Ontario, we know how many of our services are being cut. We often travel great distances to seek medical attention, and there isn't funding for important health projects that our communities need. I speak to constituents who travel many hours away, travelling to either one end of the cycle, which is Sudbury, or the other end, in the Soo.

Whether you're coming in from Hornepayne, Manitouwadge, down to Sault Ste. Marie, it is a day's event that you're going through. It is difficult for people to get to their area. They have to do this—they can't, spur of the moment, have a discussion. It takes a couple of days to plan. It's difficult to explain to them how this government squanders health care dollars with zero accountability and transparency and the health care situation in the north is severely deprived. Northern and rural communities need to know that when there is an emergency, there is help close by. This is not always the case for these folks. Without transparency in health organizations, northerners are going to suffer again.

The money is there to create a good health care system that makes patients, that makes people, the priority: not the corporations, not the boardrooms, but people, who should be at the front of the line always when we're making these decisions, but clearly the current leadership is failing to do this. This government needs to be accountable and put our patients, taxpayers, and their needs in our health care system first.

I just want to reiterate a little bit of what I highlighted with my colleague from Cambridge. We really need to get to the bottom of the responsibility in order to bring accountability and trust back to our health care system. People in Ontario deserve that. They deserve nothing less than that. But again, we need to get to that stage by having the discussions that we need. They're the ones who should be at the front of the line on every decision that we make when it comes to health care dollars.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the member's comments.

I think perhaps I was misunderstood with some previous comments I have made, so I want to make sure that my record is absolutely clear. The former Liberal Ontario Minister of Health George Smitherman has appeared before the committee. Former Ontario Minister of Health David Caplan has appeared before the committee. Current Ontario Minister of Health Deb Matthews has appeared.

What the members opposite clearly don't understand and which became very clear today was that the work by Fasken's, the legal firm, on the transition to Ornge began on January 1, 2003. In fact, there was actually an agreement, and legislation under the Red Tape Commission had begun to be drafted during 2003 under Ontario Minister of Health Tony Clement. The drafting of the legislation began on the Conservative watch.

1700

What we would like to find out was, what was the intent, because if you look at the billings of the lawyers, they're already talking about, how do you hide salaries? How do you create spin-off entities? How many foundations should we set up? They were discussing that in January and February 2003 with Guy Giorno, a former Ontario Conservative chief of staff—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to take the time I have in responding to the comments made about Bill 50, that there are three key words that people use when they talk about issues such as this. One of them is "transparency," the other is "accountability," and the one I want to start with is "oversight," because if you think about what it means to have oversight, it means that you are taking responsibility and you've been given this responsibility by the process of oversight, and you must exercise it.

Government can create agencies, as we're looking at the creation of Ornge, or any other body. But at the end of the day, it is government that has a duty to exercise, and that duty is the obligation to oversight.

When we listen to the details that came out after the scathing report made by the Auditor General and the comments made in the committee, it becomes very clear that there was no oversight by the current minister. And being able to do this, the government has or should have a transparent process. Clearly, this one does not.

That transparent process would expose the shortcomings. It would be a process that has consequences to deal with the shortcomings. In other words, all of these things are missing in the conversation about Ornge. There has been no government oversight. The government's responsibility is to two things: transparency and consequences. They did neither.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I think my colleague raised some very good points. In fact, many people have spoken about the need for us to have greater oversight, and really that is the problem with privatization that we're seeing. I know this isn't privatized, but we're seeing that creeping privatization in many, many ministries. In addition to costing more, privatization often leaves us with no oversight.

It's frustrating, at a time when we are talking about bringing in more oversight for something that we already know to be a scandal, that at the same time in the budget bill they're looking at privatizing even more things.

I think what happened at Ornge is a travesty, with the lack of oversight, the lack of checks and balances, but it's not just what was happening at Ornge that was the problem; it's the fact that it was allowed to be created. Despite the public and MPPs sounding the alarm bells for years, the government withheld the information that we were trying to seek. We tried every avenue. It was only when the media broke the story that something happened.

It sort of begs the question: How was the government allowed to do this? The problem is, we don't have anything in place to force the government to behave in a transparent and ethical manner. Maybe the legislation that we should consider now isn't, how do we stop or prevent this same scandal or travesty from happening, but maybe we should talk about giving the public the power to impeach a government or to invalidate election results. Maybe we wouldn't see so many of these spending scandals if the MPPs knew that if they were to do some-

thing wrong, the public could say, "You know what? You're out of there."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's nice to hear that the NDP has now adapted the Reform Party's recall legislation, especially after what happened in Wisconsin. It's kind of interesting where these conversations go.

Maybe we can get back to planet Earth here, because I think the health minister has done a rather extraordinary job here. If we're actually completely non-partisan about this, it was very, very clear over a period of two years that many members of the Legislature in all parties were becoming increasingly aware of concerns at Ornge. As that sense of urgency rose, over 12 to 18 months—and I think most of us want to believe in the better angels of the public service. I don't think most of us come here because we're cynical; I think most of us come here because we believe that the people in this House are honest, and I do think we're honourable people; I think all of you sacrifice quite a lot. I think that most of the people who work in the public service are generally good folks, and I think we've generally extended them the benefit of the doubt.

Once evidence is there, and I think in the last 12 months—and I've only been in this Legislature for two years—when you call in the police, when you start asking questions and you're not getting answers, you call in the Auditor General and you do all of the things, you become convinced, at a tipping point, that something has gone terribly wrong.

From my perspective, I think, in a fair-minded way, the minister acted with great promptness to do that. The bill coming forward today, I think, does close the loopholes.

I was a mayor of a city, and there were problems in Winnipeg at the time with police services. I brought in inquiries when I was mayor. It is typical that you take considered time before you act and that you act quickly enough to avoid problems. I think the Minister of Health did that, and I think this bill should be passed. It's an excellent piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Algoma-Manitoulin has a two-minute reply.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the members from Guelph, York-Simcoe, Kenora-Rainy River and also the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Unfortunately, I was hoping to hear different comments, but again I heard comments in regard to whose fault it was, again laying the blame. When you look at this, if it was the government of then, why did the government of today permit this to continue? Where were the red flags? Why didn't they see them? They were flying. The wind was blowing. Like I said earlier, there was a tornado going on.

We have to come to a sense that the world doesn't just revolve in here. There is a perception out there, which is in the general public, which is within everyday people's

lives that they see when they look at us, that it's okay to do wrong until you're caught, but then you have to correct it. We have to change that somehow. We have to really hold ourselves to a higher standard to making sure the proper decisions are made and there is some accountability and there is some transparency.

I enjoyed the words from the minister where he talked about having honour and really looking at what you're doing on a daily basis to make sure that the right decisions are made. With all due respect, all the credibility to our front-line health care workers—they need to be recognized for the work they are doing. But in all fairness and due respect to the minister, there were many, many tipping points during the discussions. There were many teeter-totter rides and many, many opportunities to get this corrected and get it done properly. We missed that ride.

I hope we can move forward and get this done once and for all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join the debate today on, interestingly enough, Bill 50. I think I'd title it "bill shifty," because what it's designed to do is to try to shift the focus away from why we have this bill before the Legislature in the first place, and that is, without any exaggeration at all, Speaker, with what might be the worst, biggest, deepest, ugliest scandal in the health care system in Ontario's history, perhaps even bigger than eHealth because of what has gone on as a result of this.

1710

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities made a comment about the police being involved in this investigation. Well, there's a good reason. It's a mess, and the government knows its back is up against the wall. It didn't bring in the police to find out what's going on; it's hoping to get some deflection away from the issue of the day and hide behind the fact that, "Well, we can't talk about this. It's the subject of a police investigation, so we cannot delve into that at this time." This is so deep and so ugly that it's almost beyond description. If the government had done some of the things prior and did its due diligence and had some oversight in Ornge, which, by the way, it had all the power in the world to do under article 15 in the original performance agreement—it had all the power to investigate, and the minister always had the power to demand information from Ornge. So now they're hiding behind that, saying they couldn't ask those questions.

At one point—but the minister dropped that one—"Oh, no, we can't ask questions because it's federally incorporated." But then someone in her ministry, I guess, reminded her that hospitals in Ontario are federally incorporated too. The implication would have been that we can't ask questions about what's going on at hospitals because, as federally incorporated entities, the province doesn't have the right to.

It's those silly assertions—and then talking about Tony Clement, for God's sake, who was the health min-

ister in 2003. You were a member then, Speaker; I wasn't, but I was still living in this province, and I think that Tony Clement was pretty busy in 2003 dealing with two episodes of SARS in this province. He wasn't all that involved with anything—that pretty much had his attention.

This mess at Ornge makes me every bit as sick as if I'd been afflicted with SARS, because the people of the province of Ontario have been so badly served by this government in this Ornge scandal.

Let's just talk about some of the details. Since 2007, Ornge has received from your money, the taxpayers of this province, over \$750 million. So we're getting close to that billion-dollar eHealth figure.

We got two leaked cabinet documents last week, one of them indicating that in 2004—Mr. Speaker, in 2004—the McGuinty government was in receipt of documents and advice from their own senior ministry advisers that said, "Whoa, this looks ugly. This is a bad idea. Don't be signing over the rights to air ambulance service in this province to Dr. Chris Mazza for a dollar"—a dollar—but they went ahead and did it.

We heard last week that the Premier said, "Oh, I never saw those documents." What goes on at those cabinet meetings? I'd like to know. I've never been at one, but I suppose all these top-secret documents, and they're too busy—I don't know, maybe they have some fancy meals or something, and they haven't got time to read the documents, or they're afraid that the gravy is going to get spilled on them. I'm not sure. But clearly, if they're not reading it, they're just as irresponsible as if they didn't react to the information that they should have had.

So advisers said, "Don't do this. Don't do this." That's one cabinet document.

We also found out that 26 deaths since 2007 were linked to Ornge—26 deaths—and the minister is going on, "Well, the coroner has said the ones he has investigated are not directly related to the transportation service." That must mean that Ornge is operating really, really well, eh? You're the subject of an investigation of 26 deaths and numerous other incidents. It should tell you about the rot and incompetency that's going on there.

But let's talk about how this thing was set up and a couple of the things that went on there. It was a Ponzi scheme from the start. The government saw what was going on and did nothing about it. I'll just give you an example out of the auditor's report. Ornge's corporate headquarters was bought for \$15 million using funds borrowed through a bond issue, and then they entered into a complex agreement with some of these other companies that they set up. They sell it to one of these companies and then they lease it back, Ornge leases it back, paying 40% more than the fair market value for the rent. So somebody is making a nice deal here. Well, it was one of those subsidiary companies. But who do you think owns the subsidiary companies? Well, interestingly enough, it was owned by members of Ornge's senior management and the board. Now, I'm not sure if that meets the classic definition of a Ponzi scheme, but it's

close enough for me. Bernie Madoff is in jail. What the heck is going on here?

Then they buy 12 helicopters. They were told they should have bought less, but they needed—Ornge is big. So they buy 12 helicopters from an Italian manufacturer, overpay for the helicopters and get over \$7 million back from the company. Most people call that a kickback. So where is that going? Well, it's going to help with future marketing services for Ornge, but that would be done by another company—again, you guessed it, Mr. Speaker—owned by shareholders and the board.

All through this time, the Minister of Health has the blinders on. "I see nothing. I know nothing." You know, the people of Ontario deserve a whole lot better, and what do we get? We get bill shifty. It was brought in here for first reading on March 21. It is now June 6, the 68th anniversary of D-Day, and we're here on second reading.

The House leaders negotiated a programming motion in this place, Mr. Speaker, to try to have some kind of orderly end to the spring session. The government never brought Bill 50 to those discussions, never put it on the table at all. Do they really want it passed, or did they just need to put something on the table here so it made it look like they were doing something about Ornge? If you really wanted to get this passed—and as they go on and say repeatedly, "If we only had Bill 50, we could make sure that Ornge never repeats itself." Well, we'd better make darned sure Ornge never repeats itself, with or without Bill 50. We could start by the people on that side of the House, starting with the man in the corner office, taking some responsibility for how they have messed this up.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, this does not absolve anyone of their responsibility and the guilt of the failure. Somebody has to pay. Their position there is, "Well, if we just move on now, everything will be fine." That would be like getting a statement from a murderer saying he won't do it again and you say, "Oh, well, that's fine. You're free to go." No, we still put them in jail. Somebody has to pay here. It should start with the Minister of Health. She should tender her resignation, and then we can find who else is to blame over there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's my pleasure to respond to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I don't think I can equal his speaking style, but one thing he brought to the discussion is that some of the transgressions that happened at Ornge were almost—maybe that's why they were ignored. They were too big to believe, because some of the things that were in the Auditor General's report—sitting back and, for the people at home, thinking, "You've got to be kidding. How did no one catch this? You've got to be kidding."

1720

This was all through the organization. Even with the accountability agreement that they say wasn't good enough and this wasn't good enough, still, at the end of the day, we're all left with, "You've got to be kidding."

With all due respect, the minister said there are people on all sides, but from this side—and I did a bit of reading—we brought it to the government's attention in 2010.

I heard testimony from a person who lived in my riding for most of his life—his parents still live in my riding—and he brought it to the people's attention in 2009. Once again, he brought it, believe it or not—one paramedic quits his job and goes to the press. Do you know what the reaction from the press was? "Come on. Nobody's going to believe that. You've got to be kidding."

Once again, we've got to get to the bottom of this. How can this happen with all these checks and balances? It's almost like no one wants to look, and I think that is the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I think we need to be clear here. There is nobody in this Legislature who does not agree with the fact that this was, certainly in my experience, the most egregious act of siphoning public money into people's pockets for private gain. I think everybody here agrees on that.

In fact, this afternoon we unanimously passed a motion for a Speaker's warrant to get Dr. Mazza in here. I placed that motion on behalf of the subcommittee at public accounts, which represents all three parties. There is unanimous agreement that we need to get to the bottom of this. What we probably don't agree on is how. Hanging the current Minister of Health isn't going to help us get to the bottom of it.

What will help us get to the bottom of it is continuing to hear from the witnesses who come forward, but what we do know is that the Auditor General of the province of Ontario said, "I can't get at the information. It's been blocked. I can't get at the information on the private spinoffs." That's what the Auditor General said.

The minister sent in the forensic auditors from the Minister of Finance once she broke the logjam and they had a look at it, and what we found was so shocking, it was turned over to the Ontario Provincial Police. No politician in the Legislature can tell the OPP what to do as a result of an investigation. I'd like to know what they think, too. But we don't have that power. In Canada, we separate police from politicians—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I've been listening to this debate all afternoon, and I think what we have here is a failure to communicate. I really do.

In order to have a sound, there has to be a sender and a receiver; at least that's what I learned in high school. One thing we used to argue in high school was, if a tree fell in a bush and nobody was around to hear it, would there be sound? I guess you could argue that either way, but I believe there wouldn't be a sound because there's nobody there to receive it, and that's what's going on on the other side of the House here. We've got a bush over

there. A tree has fallen and nobody wants to hear it, and the tree happens to be Ornge.

This legislation that we're debating today, I believe, is just designed to take the heat off the health minister, who had the authority to act, but didn't, plain and simple. She had the authority to go into Ornge when she heard about it and decided to stay away from it. This bill is nothing more than to help her get around her responsibility in Ornge. We asked—we voted to have a select committee to study this, and the minister said that she would abide by the House. Of course, we've seen how far that has gone: no select committee.

I do believe that there are more things that we need to learn before we can get to the bottom of Ornge, and fortunately, we have a few more days to do it. But I read a statement that the honourable minister said in the past. She said we needed to make changes to the government's performance agreement and couldn't do so. We found that to be false, and I believe the minister should resign over this question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I'll just scoot into my spot here. I listened to the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and I do appreciate some of his humour. He does make me chuckle. It's entertaining to listen to you, Mr.—I can't say your name, sorry. That will be a point of order you'll call me on next.

But on a more serious note, one of the things we recently debated was Bill 34. From that bill, we were discussing back and forth a little bit of history and how this government had a secret meeting and passed some legislation that allowed the G20 incident to occur, which resulted in horrific violations of human rights. The government's response to that was, "It was the Conservative federal government. We didn't have enough time. We couldn't prepare." That was their reasoning for the horrible fiasco with regard to human rights with the G20. Fine. I got that. I can see where maybe—I can even see where that timeline wouldn't have helped for the pre-planning of the G20. I can get that. But then the part where there was that secret meeting where legislation was passed—I had a problem with that.

Now we're here at the Ornge scandal, and now the member from Guelph is saying it's the PCs' Mr. Clement who's to blame. It's not working. The blame game isn't working. You have to face up to fact that you're government now. There were bells beyond belief—deafening bells. The dog whistle, I'll bet they could hear the bells ringing.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, it wasn't silent to everyone else. It wasn't just a dog whistle; everybody heard it. We need to own up to the fact that it has to have some accountability to what's happened at Ornge.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I appreciate the comments from the members from Timiskaming-Cochrane, Guelph, Perth-Wellington and London-Fanshawe.

In a manner of speaking, I want to correct my record, Speaker. I said that this may be the biggest scandal in the history of the Ministry of Health. I need to correct that. It could very well be the biggest scandal in the history of government in the province of Ontario—history of government in the province of Ontario.

To the member from Guelph, who asks, what good would the resignation of the Minister of Health do in this? Well, I'll tell you what it would do. It would send a clear message to everybody out there that this government is actually accepting responsibility for how it has made an absolute catastrophe of the Ornge air ambulance service. It would say that the government is going to take its responsibility and accept that someone has to be held accountable. Other than that, they believe that they're above accountability. It would say to all those people who would like to maybe come and appear before the standing committee that, you know what? We actually believe the government is interested in getting to the bottom of it.

But no, you hear the minister day after day defending what's going on at Ornge. How can you defend the indefensible? That's what we hear in this House on a daily basis. In order to save her own skin, she is willing to defend a bunch of crooks. Those people should be in jail. This investigation—if the minister starts with a resignation, then we'll be able to get to the bottom of this as we should.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's my pleasure—I guess it's a pleasure—to speak on G50, the Ambulance Amendment Act. I guess from our perspective, this act is meant to hopefully correct problems from the past. We're hoping, but we're not really sure if it's not meant to just mask problems from the past. That's the proof we have to see: whether it's really meant to correct or meant to mask.

We hear words like, "It's the biggest scandal in the history of the government." That could well be true. I don't know. I'll be the first to admit that I don't know.

But we've heard, and I think everyone in this House would agree, that the most important people in this issue are the patients who have the misfortune—and I don't mean misfortune in a bad way. I mean, if you're sick, you need air ambulance.

Perhaps the people who are the most impacted and who we all have the most respect for are the people who actually work in this system, the people who actually provide the care. Because they don't really care—they do care but they're not part of this scandal.

Or are they? Because does what we're talking about—in this House we're probably as far away from patient care as you can get. We are talking in abstract about scandal. But really touching the patient, we're about as far away as we can get.

But today at the committee hearing was a flight paramedic, a former employee of Ornge. I had the opportunity to sit in that committee today. I believe he was the

only one, and please correct me if I'm wrong, the only on-the-ground—I guess that's a bad term for a flight paramedic—

Interjection: Front line.

Mr. John Vanthof:—front line. Well, he works for Ornge; he might be on the ground. For the record, I'd like to read his testimony, because I think it should be not just in the committee Hansard, but it should be in the Hansard of the House. I asked him today, and it was okay with him, so hopefully it's okay with the House.

"Thank you for having me. My name is Trevor Kidd. I have been a paramedic for 11 years. I would like to briefly outline just a few of the many concerns regarding unsafe, egregious and unprofessional practices I experienced under Ornge, which I left in disgust in the fall of 2009.

"I initially joined the air ambulance in 2003. Ornge took over the Sioux Lookout base I was working at in 2006. Already having my advanced care, I started the critical care course, which traditionally took one year, under the previous carriers, and was a time frame that Ornge itself advertises. However, under Ornge, accountability for having properly trained crews was gone. The time frame for the six students in my class ranged from two years, eight months to more than five years. I feel the reluctance of Ornge to invest in their paramedics significantly compromised patient care in this province."

And something we're not realizing is Ornge is responsible for training as well as employing. They're the only game in town, so it's Ornge or else.

"In 2008, I was moved to the new fixed-wing that Ornge was starting in Thunder Bay. That was the first time I have experienced the terror of working on an aircraft which, due to the interior setup, had no business carrying sick patients. We felt we were putting patients and staff at risk. When Ornge refused to address any of these issues after many months, I applied for and was approved for a transfer to the new critical care land transfer unit that was scheduled to open in Windsor on November 3, 2008. I was one of 11 staff looking forward to providing care in this city that had long been neglected."

Remember the word "Windsor."

"Now, of course, I know what you are saying. There is no base in Windsor. On that very day, November 3, we were told that Windsor was not opening and that Markham and Peterborough would be opened half-time. That stunt secured Ornge millions of unearned taxpayer dollars every year thereafter.

"As background to the land program, Ornge received \$9.4 million in start-up funds for the 2006 fiscal year and \$13.2 million the following year, despite only opening a single base very late in the year. This was \$23 million for essentially doing nothing.

"Unfortunately for Ornge, come 2008 there was finally pressure to deliver something for the money. Instead, they created a crisis. Ornge's documents to the Ministry of Finance claim that they spent \$22.3 million on the land program that year. More recently, the Auditor General found that Ornge only spent \$8.2 million. That \$14-

million discrepancy has never been discussed, explained or accounted for....

"The Auditor General also found that year that \$8 million Ornge received for the program was not spent on the land program and was not returned to the Ministry of Health. We also know that in June 2008, \$8.4 million was transferred out of Ornge into the Ornge Foundation.... Three months later, Ornge created a crisis by not opening the bases they were supposed to. From that time on, Ornge received 70% of the originally proposed funds while delivering only 20% of the proposed crews, receiving millions of dollars every year. The executives took this windfall and ran with it. In the following months, Steve Farquhar and Tom Lepine received raises of \$96,000 and \$106,000, respectively. For the other execs, we know how well they, their family and friends made out.

"For the paramedics involved, the story is different. Some were left commuting several hours to work, others living apart from their families, and others still with expenses that Ornge caused us to incur, which ranged up to \$50,000. Ornge not only did not assist us, but their continued lies prevented us from making informed decisions which would have minimized our losses. To this day, they refuse to take any responsibility for their actions in this fraud.

"Since that time, Ornge has had staffing issues the likes of which had never been seen before. When I left a year later, Sioux Lookout was properly staffed 27% of the time; Thunder Bay's fixed-wing, 2%; and Moosonee, 0%. These problems have spread to Toronto and Sudbury, which for the first part of this year were properly staffed only 60% and 65% of the time, respectively. Pilots and engineers are also leaving in droves with six each from Toronto Island alone so far this year.

"Despite knowing that the control Ornge had over the air ambulance left me with nowhere else to go, I left two and a half years ago with the goal of exposing the corruption that was already evident by that time. I kept in contact with many staff and compiled evidence of Ornge's mismanagement. Those I talk to do not feel that this nightmare is being seriously [dealt with] to this day. The air ambulance in this province used to be among the most respected in the world. It was so high that it took six years of concerted effort for the execs to drive it into the ground. It will take many years for the system to be restored, but whether that respect can ever be returned, I have serious doubts.

"That ends my speech. However, if I may, I have asked many of those who have sent me information over the years if they would agree to allow their names to be submitted to the committee in writing under terms of extreme care for maintaining confidentiality. They unanimously said no."

That brings it back to the patient perspective and to the morale of the people who actually provide the service, because in Mr. Kidd's letter—and what happened is, he was promised a job at a base, and the day before he was supposed to move to the base, they got an email saying,

"Oh, sorry. We're not going to open that base." So what is the morale of the employees?

When you're dealing in aircraft that aren't suitable—and it's pretty simple stuff. The old aircraft had shelves on the side for all your—

Interjection: Medical supplies.

Mr. John Vanthof: Medical supplies, yes; you know, needles and stuff like that, IV tubes. In the new, improved ones, they had the stuff in bags because there was no room for the shelves in the single-engine. Well, come on. So this—I don't even like using the word "scandal," but this does affect patient care.

It came up in the committee: "Are you aware, Mr. Kidd, that you can divulge these names because you're protected under the committee?" There's a table there for press. Who are we kidding? Once again, there has to be a culture of wanting to deal with the problem, and so far on this issue, there has been a culture of wanting to shove the problem on to somebody else. There was a time, I've heard, that the NDP was blamed for Ornge. Just because our party's the same colour, we didn't create the problem.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: And Tony Clement's responsible. You know what? This scandal is—and you contradict Mr. Kidd, but this scandal is threatening patients.

1740

I'd like to close with this: As Mr. Kidd was speaking, the Auditor General was in the room. Mr. Kidd was speaking and the Auditor General was nodding. Mr. Kidd is a flight paramedic. He's not a forensic accountant, but he saw what was going on. The Auditor General is one of the brightest financial minds in the province, and they both knew. Once again, they both knew, but everybody else didn't know what was going on? Impossible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Guelph again.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much, Speaker, again.

I'm pleased to respond to the words from the member for Timiskaming. I probably got your riding all wrong, sorry. Actually, I would like to thank you for your comment that Bill 50 really is about moving forward. It's not, as has been suggested, about delay; it is about how to fix things.

I would like to comment on the testimony from Mr. Kidd, your former constituent—his father still lives in your constituency, I know—because I think he made some really interesting comments. The thing that he talked about that nobody else has talked about, which I thought was quite interesting, was about some of the training issues and upgrading to a critical care paramedic, and how that process works. Some of his comments struck a chord with me, and I would actually be kind of interested in pursuing that, because he was talking about the conflict when your employer has total control over the training and how that was very difficult for him.

He also made a really interesting comment, I thought, when he did go to the media, about the fact that this is

such a bizarre story that, when people have tried to give a heads up, people actually do react, "Well, that couldn't possibly be. What you're telling me is just so bizarre." That, I think, has been the reaction of many people when you got to the siphoning of money and the kickbacks, renting buildings at an inflated price—all of these things.

I think Mr. Kidd did have some useful things to say to us today, and certainly I would thank him for his testimony.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a privilege to speak in regard to my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane. He always stands up and, I believe, speaks from the heart and speaks off his sleeve, but he always puts out there some good thought processes for us to think about.

What I really heard him say is a lot about Mr. Kidd. Mr. Kidd went through this. He lived it, he saw it firsthand, he was part of the process. He went back to his principles and when he couldn't take it anymore, even though he stepped up and said, "There's something going wrong here," he took it. He did his job. He brought it to the light of those in power and nothing happened. At some point, he stood behind his own principles and convictions and he resigned.

I think the minister should maybe give some thought to this. Maybe she didn't know every intricate detail, and probably this scam is so big that she couldn't know every detail, but at some point, she has to step up and take that responsibility and do the right thing, do the honourable thing. As I believe John said earlier, she has to step up. She has to give faith back to the people who are paying the freight. They need to have hope and faith that the people in control actually have their interests at heart.

This isn't a political game here, folks; we're dealing with people's lives. We need to do the thing that's going to definitely ensure that the people of Ontario have trust. Those front-line people, most importantly, need to know that the people above them are going to listen to them when they bring a concern to their attention. They need to know that when they do step up—that whistle-blower is very, very important, so that people will come up and tell the truth, so that the facts truly will get there.

If we don't get to the bottom of this scandal, if we really don't understand just how complex and where it really came from and how it emanated, and who did know or didn't know, then how do we ever put protocols in place to prevent it from ever happening again? We're dealing with people's lives. We need to ensure that we get to the bottom of this. That's why we as a party have stood so strong in our conviction to say, "We will not give up on this. We will come to this House every day and make it an issue until we get to the bottom of it," so that the people of Ontario have faith in their government and their health care service.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd just like to say that the member from Timiskaming really brought it down to a human

level, as other members have said here, and we could see what the individual within the Ornge organization was doing.

Today, we went back to the first nine months of 2003, which was the period before we were elected. That was in the formative days of Ornge, and that's when the bad start came and continued. The people who were mostly involved with Heinz, who was a witness today, were Giorno, Clement, Golding, Kevin McCarthy, Apps and Blum. Those were the names I saw in all those charges from the lawyers for Ornge. That was the start of the company. That was building it up. They had Mazza in there.

I don't know what went wrong, but what they were trying to do was get away from the Red Tape Commission, trying to get less oversight, and they certainly got it. Of course, it continued with our government not knowing what was going on inside that organization, and that's really difficult. You can see how many people were hurt by it and continue to be hurt by it.

The minister has done the right thing. The minister went in there—the board left—appointed a new board, saw what was there, brought in the OPP, got a new performance agreement, and Bill 50 is part of that and is going to make that performance agreement stronger.

We have to look forward. If we keep following those air ambulances around and destroying the morale there, it's going to be difficult to rebuild. That's what the minister is trying to do. That's what McKerlie is trying to do. We'll have to go forward and make sure that the people of Ontario get the service they need and that they're paying for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: This whole thing is quite a fiasco. We're sitting here debating Bill 50. It's a bill that I believe was just made to help the Minister of Health keep her job and take some of the responsibility off her.

When there are patients who might need their care, as the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane has said in his statement, people could suffer over this—

Interjection: And have.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —and have, because of the staffing issues at Ornge.

But the horse is out of the barn, the gate was left open, and this government just can't understand that. They've got to find the solution to fixing Ornge.

One thing that I believe is not a solution to this thing is trying to introduce legislation that blocks the minister's responsibility. That's what I think is going on here with Bill 50.

We're not blaming the front-line staff. They only want to do the jobs that they were hired to do. That's what they're there for. But it's the management and, ultimately, government control that has let this horse go, and they're having a hard time reining it in.

I believe that Bill 50 was just designed to take the pressure off the health minister. It's not working. We're going to continue putting the pressure on the health

ministry and the minister to come clean as to what was going on, what she knew. Ultimately, it's her responsibility to get this mess cleaned up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane has two minutes.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. I'd also like to thank the members from Guelph, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Perth-Wellington and Ottawa-Orléans.

One thing to the member for Guelph: I didn't say that I agreed that Bill 50 was for moving forward. I said the jury is still out, whether it's actually for moving forward or trying to deflect the problem or deflect the blame. I think the jury is really still out on that.

I'd also like to add something regarding Trevor Kidd. He contacted his superiors at Ornge before he left. He contacted the ministry. He contacted his MPP. It wasn't me at the time, but it could have been me at the time. The story was pretty fabulous, but at the end of the day, when an employee in the health care sector makes allegations that strong, strong enough that he's willing to give up his job over it, I think someone in the ministry somewhere—I'm not trying to make this—but somewhere somebody said, "Whoa, hold the phone." You know? And in 2009 and 2010, when people said, "Excuse me, you maybe should check this." They should say, "Hold the phone."

1750

The fact that nobody is doing that, and the fact that we're still trying to lay blame now—in fact, if this bill was really, really intended to fix the problem, you would have whistle-blower protection no matter who you blew it on or where you gave your information. But it's not like that; it's only to selected people. In this case, if the next Trevor Kidd goes to the MPP, no whistle-blower protection under Bill 50. No Ombudsman is going to look. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services. We've heard a lot about—we no longer call it air ambulance service. When you talk to the people of Ontario, you just say Ornge, and they all know what we're talking about.

This is the McGuinty government's response to the scandal at Ornge. Unfortunately, it is a weak and, I think, ineffective response. This act gives the government authority to do things that they already could, such as appoint an investigator, but they play on the fact that, no, presently, they appoint supervisors; under the new legislation, they would be able to appoint an investigator.

Ornge was created by the government of Ontario and funded by the government of Ontario. If the government had been serious about taking action to address the problems, they could have done so last year. The government claims to have taken action by replacing some of the management at Ornge. If the minister had her hands tied, as she claims, you have to wonder how suddenly she had the ability to do just that.

This legislation addresses whistle-blowers, but it fails to provide across-the-board protection for them. In fact, it limits which individuals are protected and who they can approach with that information. We need to ensure that the people are able to speak up.

Without them, we might never have discovered that Ornge had purchased helicopters in which they didn't have room for the paramedics to do their job—at least, not to do the job properly. In an air ambulance where you can't do CPR, it's not much of an air ambulance. Without them, we might not have discovered that Ornge purchased 12 helicopters and 10 airplanes, even though their own analysis said that was three helicopters and four airplanes more than they needed. They then rented some storage space to put them in. Without whistle-blowers, we might not have learned about the mysterious payments of millions of dollars that manufacturers paid to companies related to Ornge—buy it more expensive, get a refund and put it in the bank in a private account.

The main issue here, Mr. Speaker, is accountability and responsibility. As a Conservative, I believe strongly in both of those values, and I believe the McGuinty government has failed on both.

The problems at Ornge didn't develop in the last six months. That's just when the media coverage started, and the government chose to respond. There were numerous warning signs over the last few years. Over that time the problems continued to grow, and the government continued to ignore them.

They ignored warnings from staff at Ornge. They ignored questions from my colleague the member from Newmarket-Aurora. They ignored reports that helicopters couldn't respond to calls because they were understaffed. They ignored warnings from senior civil servants even though the civil service produced a document for cabinet that references 27 cases involving Ornge as the primary subject of investigations into failed health care delivery in 2011, and an additional 40 cases from January to May of this year. They ignored the letter to the minister which laid out in detail Ornge's plan to create independent for-profit corporations; that's where that kickback came from the companies back to one of those companies.

The McGuinty government failed to take responsibility and investigate Ornge to ensure that it was providing the necessary services for Ontarians at a critical time in their lives. Bill 50 does nothing to address the fact that the government did not take action and responsibility when they should have. Bill 50 gives the minister power to appoint investigators, but in fact she already had that power under article 15 of the original Ornge performance agreement. She just chose not to take that action.

Perhaps the Minister of Health thought if she ignored the problem, no one else would notice. Perhaps they believe that it's only a problem if it ends up in the Toronto Star, because that is when the minister finally started to take notice. At that point, the minister and the McGuinty government had another opportunity to

demonstrate responsibility and accountability, and again they failed. They blocked our efforts to create a select committee to investigate Ornge.

Bill 50 does not address the need to fully investigate what happened so that we can ensure that it never happens again. Bill 50 just does what the minister already could do, and obviously it does absolutely nothing for what needs to be investigated so we know what went wrong so that that can be fixed. Again, the government has continued to focus on public relations. They are more concerned about looking bad than about trying to expose the truth and solve the problems.

Minister, your job is to make sure that the health care system works for the people of Ontario. It is your job to make sure that our dedicated paramedics have the equipment they need to save lives. Instead, we have air ambulances that are so cramped that paramedics can't perform the basic CPR.

Minister, you can do all the photo ops you want, but that doesn't fix the system. That won't make sure that if there's a car accident and someone is critically injured, there is a helicopter to get them to the hospital in time. Ontarians, like the driver of the cube van killed in a collision on Bloomington Road on May 9 and his family, were relying on you, Madam Minister, and you let him down.

As that demonstrates, the decisions that this minister makes are sometimes life and death. That's why the lack of action to deal with the problems at Ornge is so significant. It is why it is so disappointing that your response, Madam Minister, was to introduce such weak legislation.

Mr. Speaker, in 2007 we discovered that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration had handed out money without an application process. I think everybody remembers the \$1 million to the cricket club. After the auditor released his report, the Premier said, "The process (Colle's) ministry followed was clearly inadequate. In this circumstance, Mike and I agree the minister must be held accountable and that stepping aside is the right thing to do."

I don't believe that that case was anywhere near to the point where we are today with the Minister of Health. I would suggest that maybe the Premier might want to have that same talk with the Minister of Health. If it was right that the minister be held accountable for handing out taxpayer dollars without proper process and application, how can the Premier possibly justify not holding the Minister of Health accountable for this situation and asking her to step aside?

Ornge not only was a misuse of taxpayers' dollars, it also risked lives. It resulted in critically ill patients being

transported in helicopters where paramedics couldn't perform CPR and, worse, resulted in helicopters not being deployed when needed.

Serving in this Legislature is an honour, and with that comes a duty to our constituents—a duty to the taxpayers and a duty to the citizens. As a member of the cabinet, that responsibility is even greater. You have a responsibility to ensure that the ministry that you are responsible for delivers services for the people intended. As Minister of Health, the services that she oversees are possibly the most important and essential. It isn't an easy job, but it is a privilege. As a minister, you are expected to hold yourself to a higher standard; and if you fail, as this minister has, you are expected to do the honourable thing and resign.

The truth is that Ornge isn't fixed. Recently, a budget document was leaked which revealed that the agency is running a \$14.5-million deficit and will require nearly an 11% increase in funding to stem the red ink.

But, Mr. Speaker, the bigger concern is that there are still lives at risk. On February 28, a spot inspection at the London Ornge air base discovered that there wasn't one single paramedic on duty—not one. That base covers my riding of Oxford, as well as Haldimand–Norfolk, Middlesex, Chatham and the rest of southwestern Ontario, including London. If there had been an accident in Oxford that required emergency medical transportation, there would have been no way for Ornge to respond. Mr. Speaker, that's not acceptable.

It's clear that the minister is more focused on trying to make this situation appear fixed rather than actually fixing it. This legislation doesn't address the real problem, which is a government that refuses to take responsibility and accountability to fix the problem. The minister needs to step down, and we need an all-party select committee to investigate Ornge to ensure this cannot happen again.

The people of Ontario deserve to have a health care system that they can count on. They deserve to know that if they or their loved ones need emergency medical transportation, it will be there. They deserve to have a Minister of Health with integrity who will take accountability for her actions or the lack thereof.

This bill seems to deal with the structure of Ornge—and I guess the time has arrived, so, Mr. Speaker, we will continue this at a later date.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being two minutes after 6, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Jeudi 7 juin 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 June 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 juin 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OPERATOR ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ D'EXPLOITATION DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 8, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts/ Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité pour fusionner la Société indépendante d'exploitation du réseau d'électricité et l'Office de l'électricité de l'Ontario, modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would request unanimous consent that the NDP stand down their lead today, and I would do a 20-minute.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nickel Belt has asked to stand down the lead. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry; our lead on energy is busy in committee this morning, couldn't be in two places at once, so you'll have to settle for me.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're not settling.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Oh, there you go. That's pretty nice of you guys.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Depending on what you say, of course.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Exactly.

All right, so, Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act: On the surface there's a tiny, weeny little part of this bill that sounds pretty good to me. That's the part where there will be a merger of the Ontario Power

Authority and—I'm warning you right now, Mr. Speaker, there will be a lot of short forms. The Ontario Power Authority is referred to as the OPA. We will be merging that with the Independent Electricity System Operator, which is also known as the IESO. OPA and IESO would get merged. On the surface and even in practice—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: OMG.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My colleague is making me laugh here—it's something that the NDP has been asking for, and it's something that we would have no problem supporting. I would even say that we would go a whole lot further. There is an alphabet soup of energy producers, distributors and planners, and we say there could be some opportunity for reduced waste if we were to merge more of those agencies.

But for now Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, is designed to implement the merger of the Ontario Power Authority with the Independent Electricity System Operator. The problem with Bill 75 is that the government is also introducing many, many other changes that have to do with energy planning and procurement. This is where we disagree with what the bill has to say.

Make no bones about it: The NDP supports the consolidation of Ontario's fragmented hydro agency system, and we certainly agree with the government intention to reduce waste by merging those two agencies, the OPA and IESO. However, the way they have gone about Bill 75 is that it will remove the independent planning and review required by the present supply planning regime. This is something that we cannot support. We're sort of surprised that it has been put in there, because recent events would show you that, when you take away the opportunity for people to be engaged in planning for energy, it doesn't lead to anything too good. One needs to look no further away than some of the backlash associated with something good: Green energy is something that we can all agree to. But then, when we look at the way it has been implemented, where those wind turbines are being put in places where people feel that they did not have an opportunity to be heard—they wouldn't have done it that way if they had had an opportunity to be heard. Some of this, I would say, cost the Liberals quite a few seats in rural Ontario, yet here they go again, coming forward with a bill that would further reduce the opportunity for Ontarians to have a say in the plan.

Don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker: We all know energy is at the core of making Ontario work. We need energy to be reliable and available throughout Ontario. We need this to be part of a government plan so that present

and future businesses, as well as people, know that there is a plan in place and that energy will be there when they need it so that we can plan new expansion.

I can talk for my riding, Mr. Speaker. We have been selected as the case base for Cliffs resources to develop a new plant that would process the chromite that comes from the Ring of Fire, bring it to my riding of Nickel Belt and process it into ferrochrome. This type of processing plant requires a tremendous amount of energy in the transformation process. They felt that they could do the planning to set up this kind of processing plant in Nickel Belt in part because they knew we had a strong, secure, reliable energy supply coming to that part of my riding, to that part of Ontario, to that part of Nickel Belt. Are we in agreement that you need to have a strong plan in place, a plan that plans for the future but also gives reassurance to business and people that we will have a strong energy system?

Here we have the merger of the Ontario Power Authority with the electricity system operator, and it will form a new agency, Mr. Speaker, called the Ontario Electricity System Operator, a new acronym called OESO. I hope you haven't lost me already, because there are many more of those acronyms coming in our future.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: OMG.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My colleague is bringing me off track again here, and I'm having a tough enough time as it is.

This is well-intentioned. The merger is well-intentioned and something that I think we can all rely on and we can all support. But what it also does is eliminate the current integrated power system plan. This is referred to as the IPSP. Really, think of it as, this is the plan; this is how we plan as to how much energy we will need, how we will produce that energy, what type of energy form it will be—will it be green energy, will it be water power, solar, wind, will it be a gas-fired power plant, run of the river? This is the plan. This is something that is important to the people of Ontario.

Unfortunately, with the merger, the opportunity for public and stakeholder participation in energy planning will be greatly reduced. We already know that Ontarians care about their energy supply, that Ontarians want to be engaged in the making of those plans, because it affects them, it affects their neighbourhood, it affects their livelihood, it affects their business and their business decisions. We know that Ontarians want to be part of this dialogue, but unfortunately, this bill, with the integration of the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator into the Ontario Electricity System Operator, will take away the opportunity for the people of Ontario to have a say in this plan. This is highly problematic for us.

0910

There will be changes to energy planning, as well as energy procurement. Bill 75, the bill we're talking about this morning, removes the Ontario Power Authority's power and duty to develop an integrated power system plan for approval by the Ontario Energy Board—another

acronym, the OEB. If you think there are too many, I agree wholeheartedly with you. I would merge the whole thing together and do like Manitoba does: have one power planner, supplier, operator and distributor, and have it in the not-for-profit, public domain.

But that's not what we're doing here today. What we are doing is that Bill 75 removes the power and duty of the OPA for approval of that plan. Basically, the Ontario Energy Board's duty to review and plan for economic prudence, cost-effectiveness and regulatory compliance will be greatly reduced. The IPSP, which, as I said before, is the integrated power system plan, is replaced by a ministerial energy plan. What does that mean? It means that the minister must consult with the OEB on the impact of the energy plan on consumer electricity bills and on methods of managing that impact. It also means that the ministry must also refer the plan to the OEB for review of the estimated capital costs in the plan, in accordance with the referral.

This is really different from an independent review of the plan by the OEB. We have limited the amount of oversight. We have limited the ability for stakeholders to test, to be heard, to influence, and basically to be respected in the government's energy plan for procurement, as well as the consequences of that plan on the rate that we pay.

Make no mistake. It doesn't matter who plans it; we end up paying this lovely little bill that you urban folks get every month and we northern folks get every two months. But it doesn't matter; we still get our bills and we will still have to pay for that energy.

We have a system in place right now that gives people some opportunity for shaping that plan. Ontarians have proven that they want to help shape that plan, but now we have a bill in front of us that will limit the amount of consultation that stakeholders will be able to do.

This is a far cry from the independent review of the plan by the OEB that is presently required. It deprives stakeholders of the ability to test before the OEB can proceed.

It also continues a trend that was already apparent before Bill 75 for the government to try to put control over the activities of the OPA and the OEB by a combination of policy imperatives and directives. We see more and more ministerial control of our energy plan, whether we're talking procurement or planning, and less and less of an opportunity for the people of Ontario to be heard on those plans. It doesn't matter where you go—certainly in northern and rural Ontario—people have proven that they want to be engaged. I would say that certainly the people of Oakville, before the election, said they also wanted to be consulted on those energy plans, and they did not want this little gas power plant to come to their city. People have proven over and over again that they want to have a say. They want to be consulted, but we're taking that opportunity away from them.

I would also say that Bill 75 blurs the distinction between the functions of the OESO and the OEB, so I would like to use the six minutes left to talk a little about the integration and the potential for conflict.

Once we start to have overlapping function between the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority, and the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, it will present a new set of problems for the OESO, the new agency we are creating. Although the short- and long-term forecasting functions of the IESO and the OPA should integrate well, it will be more difficult to integrate the planning and procurement function of the OPA, Ontario Power Authority, with the IESO's responsibility to administer and enforce market rules.

We in the NDP feel that the creation of an electricity market was a mistake in the first place, and in the short/medium term it has proven to be a mistake. Therefore, we have to be careful to make sure that there is a separation between the generation procurement and the market operation.

Let me give you an example, Mr. Speaker. The OPA currently has the responsibility to make and implement a procurement process for its IPSP, for its plan. The IESO regulation of market participants includes potential parties to OPA procurement. Therein lies the potential for conflict of interest.

I must say that Bill 75 recognizes it and tries to cure the potential for conflict of interest in different ways. Some of those ways would be that the minister take back responsibility for procurement decisions, or that the board of directors of the OESO is required "to ensure that there is effective separation of functions and activities of the OESO relating to its market operations" and "its procurement and contract management activities." The OESO is prohibited from conducting itself in a "manner that could unduly advantage or disadvantage any market participant or any party to a procurement contract or interfere with, reduce or impede a market participant's non-discriminatory access to transmission systems or distribution systems."

We already know, Mr. Speaker, that there is lots of conflict right here, right now in Ontario when it comes to access to transmission systems. I can tell you of what I considered—I'm no expert—really good green energy projects in my riding that had been given the okay under the FIT program, the feed-in tariff, but couldn't connect to the grid. I can give you the example of a church in Capreol that was facing the perfect way, had a perfect piece of land to have a few solar panels—quite a few, actually—installed on the roof of the church as well as the grounds of the church. They did all of their research, they got a FIT contract and then they found out that they could not get access to the grid. So all the work they had done and money they had put out was for nothing.

You can see, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that this quickly becomes a source of conflict. If you are creating a new merged identity where those conflicts will be harder to tear apart, then you are just multiplying conflicts. I don't know what you think, Mr. Speaker, but I don't think a piece of legislation should be put out there that will be causing more conflicts than we already have. Let's face it: The energy file is a file that can be very divisive. I have many, many run-of-the-river or modified peaking

green energy contracts going on in my riding, and the opportunity for people to be heard is something that people take very, very seriously. The opportunity for conflict at the local level—conflict that sometimes pits one neighbour against the other, the worst kind of conflict—is alive and present. Here we are bringing forward Bill 75, which has the possibility to make those conflicts worse.

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Another way that conflict can be avoided is, the board of directors right now is required to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. However, the OESO will still have the power and responsibility to implement the minister's procurement decisions. It is not clear right now how the board of directors of the new OESO will keep these conflicting functions separate without, in effect, keeping the two former organizations separate under one roof. There is a tension between this obligation and the absolute imperative to reduce waste and duplication and bring back coherence in hydro planning that was lost in the disastrous Harris era experiment of privatization and deregulation of Ontario's electricity system.

The NDP is not convinced that this bill will reduce those tensions, and we're certainly not convinced that this bill will put out what the government said: a saving in the range of \$25 million a year. I would say frankly that this remains to be seen. There are too many opportunities for conflict in this bill as it is now. Although it starts with a good first step of merging some of the operators, it also creates its own set of problems.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Nickel Belt on this extremely important bill that we have, Bill 75.

This bill was introduced on April 26, 2012. The Independent Electricity System Operator is the system operator—this is a little bit confusing, such a large organization with four or five operating bodies. The OPA is the Ontario Power Authority. There was overlap with these two. This is what this bill is about: It's about bringing these together. It's not the only thing that is being done in relation to energy, but they're being brought together to get rid of this overlap and make the system more efficient, because of conflicting duties when it comes to energy. That \$25 million is one of the savings, but I'm sure there will be larger savings in the future as the planning of our energy system in Ontario has more control of the detail. You don't have two organizations trying to do two different things when really their objective is the same. We're going to have one. This is an important step.

We can all be negative about it as well, but there are other things that are happening in the energy sector. The panel has been set up with Murray Elston, Floyd Laughren and David McFadden. They'll be looking at some of these issues too. I'll be glad when they come to Ottawa, because Ottawa has had an issue for a long time to do with hydro. We've got Hydro Ottawa, which

charges about 7% or 8% less than Hydro One. I happen to be in the 7% or 8% higher, and my people there, about 40,000 homes, are paying too much for energy. I'll get back to that as we move forward, and I'll be speaking next.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen carefully to the member from Nickel Belt. I do respect—she spends a fair amount of time on issues. More importantly, what I think she was saying, and I tend to agree with her observation, is there's a deliberate conflict here. If you really look at the structure of what they're doing first, the amalgamation of an organization that our leader, Tim Hudak, said was completely unnecessary—the Ontario Power Authority was set up originally to develop a supply mix proposal for the province of Ontario: Where does the generation come from? I think they've done the job. People argue with the commitments to renewable or gas or—you know, this is a government that promised to close the coal plants in 2007.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: How'd that work out?

Mr. John O'Toole: They have made a complete mess out of that file. They use it as sort of a social policy as opposed to an economic policy. I think—

Laughter.

Mr. John O'Toole: They're laughing over there. But I'm disappointed—because there's a report here by the Environmental Commissioner called *Restoring Balance: A Review of the First Three Years of the Green Energy Act*.

What I am saying here is that if you look in to the bill itself—and I think the member from Nickel Belt mentioned it—it says, "The OESO is not an agent of the crown and is composed of its board of directors.... appointed by the Minister of Energy." I can't believe it. Even in the preamble of the bill here, it says that there's a procurement relationship between the two bodies.

I think it's an inherent conflict of interest. We are seeing that all the time now with the Ornge helicopter. They're setting up the same organizations, squandering money—and no accountability.

I want them to respond to what I've said. In fact, I hope I get a chance this morning to speak on it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Algoma-Manitowlin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's a privilege to get up to speak to Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, and to follow a lot of the comments that my colleague from Nickel Belt has just made.

I'm always the person that will try to put a positive on things. Yes, this was a cornerstone of some of the asks that during our campaign we were asking for: to eliminate a lot of the repetitive services. Eliminating a lot of those repetitive services will bring savings to the consumer. This takes us to that step.

Let's not forget where these services and where the privatization of hydro—where it all began 12 years ago. It's important to remember how that began. It's fright-

ening to hear those types of words still coming out today, where we're talking about privatization.

This is a small step forward. The other issue that it deals with is that, yes, it will deal with overlapping services and administration costs and responsibilities that are there. Once again, it's a small step forward that will start bringing benefits to the consumers. This is a good step forward.

But one of the things it doesn't do is that, although the IPSP was far from perfect and could have used some improvements, at least through that process it provided a very formal and informative way to guarantee that stakeholders and individuals from the public can actually participate in the discussions of consultation and bring their views forward. If we are going forward with this and we're going to have those discussions, we need to find a way to provide all stakeholders and our general public with the opportunity to provide their input fully to this process to make it very effective.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to participate in the discussion on Bill 75. Bill 75 is the act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998. I'm glad to hear that the third party, the NDP, is supporting amalgamation of the Independent Electricity System Operator and also the Ontario Power Authority. As we all know, the Independent Electricity System Operator is an organization responsible for the operation of the system, and the Ontario Power Authority is an organization responsible for planning. The operation and planning of industrial institutions are closely related to each other, so that's why we want to amalgamate these two organizations. This amalgamation is going to eliminate duplications, it's going to save \$25 million a year for the ratepayers of Ontario, and it's going to streamline and coordinate the efforts and responsibilities of these two organizations.

I want just to make a comment about the comment made by the member from Durham asking us to comment on his comment. I must mention, Mr. Speaker, that when his party was in office for eight years, our electricity system was really in a shambles. They made no investment in our electricity system, two or three nuclear reactors had been shut down because of mismanagement, and the price of electricity was deregulated. As a result, there was an \$8-billion increase in the stranded debt of the former Ontario Hydro, and now we are paying for this debt retirement on a monthly basis.

These are just a couple of points I wanted to mention about the performance of the PC Party in relation to our electricity system when they were in office for eight years.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Nickel Belt, you have two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: First, I'd like to thank the member from Ottawa-Orléans. The part he talks about—the overlapping between the two agencies and the posi-

tives that will come out of merging the Ontario Power Authority with the Independent Electricity System Operator, merging that bureaucracy—certainly is something the NDP can and will support. We see value in having less of this alphabet soup of energy procurement, planning, operating, distributing etc. Look at your hydro bill and you will agree that if there were a few less lines, we would all be happier. We agree with that part of the bill.

Then the member from Durham showed the other part of the bill where the possibilities for conflict do exist and will be made worse by some of the provisions in this mix. The OPA is there to look at the supply as to, how will we generate power? Will it be green? Will it be run of the river? Will it be coal-fired? Many, many promises have been made over many election campaigns but very few have actually been rolled out.

The energy file is a polarized issue, and bills brought forward should try to de-escalate those conflicts, not make them worse.

My colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin, like me, like every one of the NDP, supports the elimination of duplication and consolidation in the power industry in Ontario.

To the member from Richmond Hill, we all agree that we need a stable source of energy. People, business and industry depend on it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to stand in my place in this Legislature to speak to Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, 2012. As I said before, and it needs repeating to make sure people know, this bill, introduced on April 26, 2012, will join two organizations together: the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, which is the system operator, as has been mentioned, and the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority, which, as my colleague has just said, is the planning function. Bringing these two together is certainly going to accomplish the efficiencies we need to have in our electricity system in Ontario. It's going to be a step in that direction.

It is not only being done in isolation. As I mentioned in my two minutes, I look forward to the panel reporting, because they're going to report on a range of issues: long- and short-term financial savings associated with consolidation, benefits for ratepayers, long- and short-term operational efficiencies, potential risks. The Ontario Distribution Sector Panel will report back to the Minister of Energy within a year. All of these issues are very important as we find efficiencies in the energy sector.

I hope they're looking at a city like my own, which is Ottawa. Was it in 2000 when the city of Ottawa brought together 13 or 14 municipalities, I believe? I attended the last meeting of the group that had put the plan together. I said, "What are you going to do about hydro?" At that time, the municipality that was coming in was Cumberland, and the city of Cumberland at the time did not have their own individual hydro. They had Hydro One providing that. Most of the municipalities had their own. There was Gloucester Hydro, Nepean Hydro, Ottawa

Hydro. They were just bringing those together. We were left out. I asked a question at that last meeting—I think the meeting was in January, and the election was over in October. When I was elected as councillor, I asked, "What are you going to do about having two electrical utilities in one city? It's not going to be efficient. It's not going to be fair." We were bringing all the sewers together, all the water lines together, all the roads together. We were assuming all of those, but they left us with the higher Hydro One—Hydro One rates were higher.

Cities are easy to service, but when you get to the great outdoors in the north and the small communities, it's expensive. With that 5% or 6% or 7% additional cost on our hydro, we've been subsidizing rural Ontario and northern Ontario, as compared to other utility users in the province. We got caught with that.

This is a time, when that panel is going there—that will be some of the discussion. Some of the discussions will be around some of the things that the member for Nickel Belt mentioned: How do we get the community input? How do we make those decisions so that the decisions are made for the people? Those things, I think, will be worked out. I really think it's important that that panel does their work. I really think it's important that this legislation goes ahead, as well, and we'll have a better system here.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it makes a lot of sense to update the structure of OPA and IESO, and it's the right time to do it. When the OPA was set up, it had the important task of renewing our aging energy infrastructure, eliminating coal and moving to a cleaner energy system. The OPA has done a lot of important work over the past eight years, but now we have a responsibility to ratepayers to take a look at our energy sector and ensure it's as efficient as possible. I think that's all part of what this is about.

We are proposing to implement a similar phased approach that has successfully merged GO Transit and Metrolinx, Infrastructure Ontario and the Ontario Realty Corp. These mergers were a success, saving taxpayers money and providing better services to Ontarians, and that's what it's all about. Examining every aspect of the energy sector will allow us to provide the best possible value for Ontarians. Merging the OPA's planning knowledge with the IESO's operational expertise will make for the most efficient organization possible.

The proposed new agency would be responsible for procurement and market operations, providing opportunities to align contracts, and market rules to benefit consumers. Streamlining the system to reduce the burden on local utilities will ultimately save ratepayers money. Creating an electricity system that is more responsive to changing conditions is part of it.

I'll go back to the Ottawa situation, which is one of the situations that I've been involved in. We've had many attempts to have Hydro Ottawa take over all the electricity in the city of Ottawa. That would be to their advantage. Right now, Hydro One has the growth areas of Ottawa. One of the growth areas, of course, is Orléans

sector; others are in Manotick, for instance, which I think is still Hydro One, and West Carleton. So a good part of the growth areas do not have the advantage of having Hydro Ottawa working with the city to work these things out.

The issue on trying to get one hydro utility in Ottawa, including the service and support of 50,000 residents outside who are serviced by Hydro One, is always a willing buyer and a willing seller. The municipality wants to get it for nothing; Hydro One wants the full commercial value plus. Over 10 years, it has been fought back and forth. I hope that part of this panel discussion looking at the local distribution companies etc. will look at this. It's not efficient to have a city the size of Ottawa being served by two local distribution companies. It just doesn't work. The outages in Orléans were 6% or 7% more. At one time they were two or three times as bad as the city of Ottawa was. Hydro One has put a lot of investment in our east end, and that has improved it, but it's not the way to go—one city, one hydro utility. We don't have two sewer utilities, we don't have two water utilities, we don't have two road utilities. Why should we have one service coming in from two suppliers that have different rules and different objectives?

0940

One of the things I'm very proud of that we have done—and it was mentioned by the member opposite that we hadn't done it—we're 90% out of coal. When we came in, it was something like 23% to 25% of our energy generation was coal. The estimated cost of that, just from a health perspective—and this was from an independent study—was \$4 billion a year. We didn't get it done when we thought we could get it done. A lot of things intervened. It was a bigger problem, I guess, than we thought, but we accomplished 90% of it. In 2014, when the carbon dioxide in the world, in parts per million, as has been measured for 40 years in the same way, will have reached 400, which is a disaster area—it's now 393. When it reaches 400, Ontario will be out of coal. We'll be the first jurisdiction, certainly in North America but I think in the world, that has taken the coal issue and resolved it. It cost Ontario ratepayers a lot of money, but they did it for the health reasons. They did it to protect our children and grandchildren against climate change.

You know, sometimes with climate change—it's a buried issue now. Nobody can talk about it. You're not supposed to. I was disappointed, but Senator Brown, who I happened to take a plane ride from Ottawa to Toronto with, is up there on taxpayers' money, with Nancy Greene, and they're working as the deniers of climate change. It's not happening; there's no such thing as climate change. It's very, very important, and anybody from BC—I would like to ask if maybe Nancy Greene would write me a letter and explain to me why she's not worried about the environment. To have two senators working as a deniers' team—it was in the paper. I think Minister Kent may be the lead on that; I don't know. But climate change is so important.

Ontario did what they had to do. Ontario got out of coal. We should be a leader. We lose some of that leader-

ship because of who the other nations meet at the conferences. Canada has won the fossil award at so many—from Copenhagen to Mexico to South Africa, and we'll be doing it again. It's unfortunate.

The Alberta oil sands is controversial, but I know how much it adds to our economy. I know how much it adds to the jobs. But if those oil companies could just take a little bit of the percentage and say, "Well, look, we're causing 10,000 megatonnes of greenhouse gas a year. What we're going to do is reduce energy use in your homes in Alberta and across the country. We'll take that money and we'll put it toward energy retrofits in our homes," which are expensive, but which are needed and which have paybacks normally under seven or eight years. They could do that, rather than taking out page ads showing a beautiful mother, a biologist—it just happened to be a biologist—looking after all the sins of that—

Mr. John O'Toole: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: According to the standing orders, I think the member is supposed to be addressing Bill 75. I'm not being rude, but he's talking about tar sands and oil sands, and I can't see where any of this relates to this bill, which is a restructuring of the service provisions and administration of the energy of Ontario. I would ask him to stick to the topic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I believe the member is sticking to the topic.

Please continue, the member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Speaker, I can understand where it's coming from. I mean, these people did not want us to get out of coal. They did not want us to bring in these smart meters. They have been consistent. They didn't want us to have tobacco bylaws. They had a bill last week promoting pesticides. So I'm not surprised where that comes from.

We have accomplished a lot. We've rebuilt the distribution system for the 21st century—we've invested \$7 billion to rebuild it—and we've brought on 9,000 megawatts of new and refurbished clean energy. Of course, the party opposite would be against clean energy. It's the same as taking smoking out of bars or airplanes. It's the same as not spraying pesticides on lawns. So they're against clean energy, and that's hurt the clean energy industry here, but the Green Energy Act has created 20,000 jobs and is doing important things. We're a North American leader, and we all know—or at least people who read the scientific reports know—that within 10 to 15 years you've got to be away from coal. It's going to be difficult for the US and for China, but they're going to have to get out of coal. Green energy is what's going to be the new energy—and conservation—and we're going to have to do that.

So we're phasing out of coal with its \$4 billion in health and environment costs. This was great. This was the thing to go on, and Ontarians have supported us. I'm pleased that Ontarians have supported us. Ontario is the leader in the world in getting out of coal, and that's where we all have to go.

Joining these two organizations together will let them plan more efficiently, will save taxpayers and customers money. In addition to combining the organizations to form the Ontario Electricity System Operator, the OESO, we're asking OPA and Hydro One to cut costs. We're undertaking a review of the feed-in tariffs. We are benchmarking the OPG and Hydro One against national and international peers.

And something I want to see is that we will, through an Ontario Distribution Sector Panel, be reviewing Ontario's local distribution companies. I think that's extremely important. That will be important for Ottawa.

I'm proud to be part of the government which is leading North America in greenhouse gas reductions. You know, all countries must get out of coal in the next 30 years; it's absolutely necessary. Twenty would be better, and 10 would be even better. It's going to take a long time for those economies to adjust to that.

I think this bill that is in front of us is the right direction. It's just part of the changes we're making in the energy sector, and it will be important. I hope that the members of this House will support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I think the member for Ottawa—Orléans—I want to set the record straight here right now—was impugning motive. He was in violation of standing order 23(i), which says he should not impugn or imply false information on another member. He should know—he's a very clever gentleman—that the only coal plant that's ever been closed in the province of Ontario was closed by Elizabeth Witmer.

Now, the truth of it is—this isn't really relevant to the bill—that in the election in 2003 they promised they were going to close the coal plants by I believe it was 2011. Now, the Minister of the Environment is here, and I know he has been Minister of the Environment a couple of times. The fact is that they've changed that and they still haven't closed the coal plants.

Now, we're using less coal, and the reason we're using less coal is because there is no economy. The economy of Ontario uses about—67% or 68% of all the electrons are used by industry: refining, pulp and paper, steel, manufacturing. Those are the very sectors of the economy that have gone off the cliff. I don't blame it all on Premier McGuinty, but he's got to take some responsibility for the plight of 600,000 families without jobs. All he's done—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Municipal Affairs is a very clever person, but she's offside on all this as well.

They do not have a clue how serious the problems are in Ontario. Don Drummond told you that you have an economic calamity on your hands. You have turned energy into a complete mess.

Now, in the next while I'm going to get a chance to speak on this. I'll report on the bill. I'll talk to you on the bill about what's actually going on. Most of you haven't read it.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Ms. Cansfield as well.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, you haven't read it. If you had, your notes would at least tell you that there is an inherent conflict in the bill itself. I'll make it more clear later on.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Now I'm really looking forward to hearing the prior speaker's comments. I'm going to be listening quite attentively to what he's going to be highlighting to this House when he speaks shortly.

0950

Again, this really is maybe taking a small step forward, but when you're taking that step forward, you can't forget the good that was there in the past by having those checks and balances to make sure that the proper decisions are going to be made, going forward.

When we're saying that, we really need to make sure there is a process in order to have all of our stakeholders and all of the individuals sit down and really scrutinize where this is going and what this act is supposed to do. It's eliminating a process, and we need to make sure that it doesn't weaken it, that it actually strengthens what we're trying to do.

From where I stand, the benefit needs to be to the consumers. The consumers need to benefit from this—not only benefit through a reduction or a clarity on their hydro bill or their consumption bill, but also with the environment and also with other checks and balances that need to be there. We really need to make sure that those flags are there to be raised when they need to be raised.

It's really important that we take the time to scrutinize this. I look forward to having those discussions, to making sure that—a lot of what we campaigned on, as a party, during the campaign was to eliminate a lot of the repetitive services and the administrative costs that are there, because that will definitely bring benefits to the consumer.

I look forward to hearing some of the comments that I'm going to be hearing from the prior speaker, because a lot of the reasons why we're here today are because of actions that that government took then. I'll sit and listen now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's a pleasure to talk to Bill 75. My colleague the member from Ottawa—Orléans very eloquently explained the reason why we are bringing this bill forward, and I'm glad to hear that the third party is supporting the amalgamation of these two Ministry of Energy agencies, the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority.

The member from Durham has commented on the burning of coal for the production of electricity. I must indicate that when his party was in power, the burning of coal increased by 127% in Ontario. I must tell you, Mr.

Speaker, that burning coal costs \$4.4 billion to our health care and the environmental system. It is the worst method of electricity production. We made a policy decision some years ago to shut down all coal-fired plants in the province of Ontario, and we have already shut down several of those plants.

By the way, the burning of coal has decreased in Ontario by 90%. Now it's only 10% in comparison to the past burning of coal, and that will become 0%, to absolutely zero, within less than two years.

Burning coal is the worst way of producing electricity. Instead of coal, we have introduced clean, renewable energy. Now we are producing electricity using energy from the sun. We are producing electricity using energy from the wind. Also, we have introduced biogas and biomass energy into our energy mix in Ontario. This is 21st-century energy-production technology, and we are using that and we have put Ontario on the map as far as renewable energy production goes in the whole continent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: I listened intently to the member for Ottawa—Orléans. In his comments today, I noticed that he spoke for about 14 and a half minutes on Bill 75, and about 14 minutes of those were actually not on the bill itself, so I'm going to take the liberty of addressing some of the comments he made.

One of the comments he made was the fact—he claims—that Ontario is a green energy leader. What he doesn't tell you is that Ontario is a manufacturing-jobs leader.

He also says, and the member for Richmond Hill states, that consumption of coal went up and all this sort of fun stuff, but what he doesn't say is that in Ontario, when we were in office, we created one million new jobs. Jobs, Mr. Speaker, are part of what we're talking about here, and we're treating energy policy as part of economic policy.

What he also didn't say was some of the issues that we're having with the energy file. I sit on the estimates committee. I notice the member for Richmond Hill also sits on the estimate committee. At estimates, we're asking the government to table some documents with respect to the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants, documents that are not forthcoming. Certainly, they simply didn't come when we asked for them and now we're mired in procedural wrangling. They're delaying the work of the opposition to hold this government to account and to actually be transparent, which would be to actually table the documents that the committee has requested. This is what's going on in estimates today. This is what Minister Bentley, the Minister of Energy, is taking part in. He doesn't want to reveal the bad, black holes in energy policy in Ontario, and I say that this House had better see those documents soon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member from Ottawa—Orléans, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Durham. I'd just like to let him know that the Conservatives may have promised to close that coal plant and they may have done that for several years, but that coal plant was closed after 2003, when we were the government. I'd just like to mention that to him.

The member for Algoma—Manitoulin—I can understand where he's coming from. He's concerned with some of the consultation and checks and balances that are in the system. I'm not aware of how those are going to play out, but certainly he'll be able to get that information from our minister.

The member for Richmond Hill, really a good scientist and someone who, as PA to energy, is doing a fine job there—I appreciated his words.

The member from Cambridge—a green energy leader. But I think you have to remember that manufacturing has that 30-cent, 40-cent wage in the Third World. I think that had something to do with it. The downturn in the US has something to do too; they were taking 70% of our products. Sure, energy costs are a cost of manufacturing, an important cost, but the environment has to be higher up the scale in that. To continue with cheap coal is not the solution to manufacturing in Ontario.

I want to thank them all for this. I'm pleased that there's a good discussion going on in this House about where we're going with energy and how we can save those dollars. I think that's what the intent of this bill and this panel is: to bring together these two agencies, make them more efficient and then have a look at the whole system across the province. I'm looking for a good answer for Ottawa when that panel reports in a year.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: I wasn't really sure, at the start of this morning, that I was going to be speaking on this, so I'll try to stick to the topic. I was going to seek unanimous consent to stand down my rotation, but I don't think that would be supported.

I do want to start clearly by saying to the previous two speakers, in no respect is this personal in any way. One is an engineer, and the other has a Ph.D in physics, so I know they're qualified individuals. But at the same time, I know they've been given notes that I'm sure they don't even believe themselves. Because if you knew much about it—in fact, Mr. McNeely said—and he was, I believe, an Ottawa councillor at one time, as I was a councillor. Most of the people here, a lot of them, were; Mr. Leal was, as well, in Peterborough. The local utilities really only serviced urban areas, where there was density. Hydro One—back then it was called Ontario Hydro—serviced all the hard-to-service areas, where there was no density. It's very expensive to have 100 miles of wire and only one customer, and servicing that wire in storms and all the rest of it is very expensive.

There were, I think, almost 400 municipal utilities, and they all had different bills, different rates, whatever. But let's be clear: Utilities do not set the rate. The Ontario Energy Board basically sets the rate for electricity

per kilowatt hour, but they do add on charges and services charges, and that is where there were differences. But the rate itself was uniform; in fact, it still is today, pretty much.

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At that time for hydro, during the NDP era, it was chaos as well. A lot of it was the expensive solution of generation, which was nuclear. Nuclear energy is very capital-intensive, and it's a big-footprint type of set-up. I may not agree with it, but that's the decision that the Ontario Power Authority has made, that over 50% of our energy is going to come from nuclear. All parties have bought into that; there's not a question about that. Back then, the government had a lot of trouble. In fact, they got to nine cents a kilowatt hour, then they froze the rates. Actually, during the completion of Darlington, the project went from \$4 billion to, I think it was \$15 billion by the time it got completed. They could never service that debt until they started to generate electrons. So for the years and delays—the NDP stopped it, the Liberals under David Peterson stopped it. In fact, it was stopped and started quite a bit, until the project finally got completed. Then they could put into the rate the recovery of the \$14 billion.

The set-up at that time—it was called the Macdonald commission. Donald Macdonald was Trudeau's finance minister—a brilliant guy. We're not into politics here. They realized that the whole Ontario Hydro was in serious trouble. The assets could not generate revenue to pay off the debt. They were, by any measure, bankrupt. The Macdonald commission looked at it and decided to put it into profit centres: the generation side, which was hydroelectric, coal and nuclear—that was basically what they had at the time—and a couple of gas plants. They looked at the supply mix. At that time, the generation capacity was around 25,000 or 26,000 megawatts. Then they took the wires, the transmission system—these are the big wires—and set up a company for that. That's a natural monopoly. Whoever gets on the big wires to transmit power, high voltage, it's a monopoly. You have to be on the wires to get somewhere. The small wires were the utilities. The utilities were a real mess. But we did merge a lot of them; there's no question about it. In fact, you have a paper out now that you're going to try to merge them again. I commend you for that, quite honestly, because there should be a seamless relationship between the consumer and the bills they pay, whether it's in Mississauga or in Burlington or wherever else. We shouldn't have all these municipal utilities with different bills. They've gone a long way to harmonizing the bills, so you can see what the electrons cost, what the delivery costs are.

I would suspect, to anyone listening, the debt retirement charge is quite problematic. People don't get it. That's dealing with the debt that the Macdonald commission talked about. In fact, your revenue from the debt retirement charge, per year, is around \$900 million—about \$1 billion. Just to keep it simple, it's \$1 billion. You've been collecting that \$1 billion for eight years.

There were reports by economists that said the residual stranded debt of that \$25-billion hole in the ground, there was part of it—that's the residual stranded debt that wasn't supported by the assets. That's where that charge came from—and it's not me. Look, Donald Macdonald's commission report explains it to you. I had someone explain it to me, and I took the time, over many years, to read it and ask questions. That gives you a thumbnail sketch of the history.

We committed, in the same election in 2003, to cancel the coal plants, and we said 2014. That's documented proof. Here's the issue—and I said it during the election, because I'm fortunate enough to represent the riding of Durham, which is the largest nuclear generation area in Canada. I have a lot of experts who tell me how this system works, and they're very helpful to me in that way. In fact, the real issue is that the organization right now of the whole system has been kind of messed up a bit. The debt retirement, I believe, is paid off, yet we have the highest rates in North America. The reason we do is the way you're trying to pay for the feed-in tariffs. What happens is that renewable energy, wind and solar—and both these engineers understand that—is called non-dispatchable energy by the professionals. In other words, you can't generate electrons when the wind isn't blowing or the sun isn't shining, but you need electrons all the time. So when you have electrons being generated when you don't need them, like at night when everybody is asleep and low demand, what do you do with those? You actually have to get them off the system, but what your contract says under the FIT tariff is that you've got to buy them. The province has committed for 20 years that whenever you're generating electrons from renewable energy FIT contracts, you get paid for them. You're not only getting paid, you're getting 80.2 cents a kilowatt-hour for microFIT installations.

Now, that 80 cents, if you think of how the system works—and the engineers know—the system, the wire, is like a garden hose. If it's full of electrons going from the generation—the nuclear plant which is running—and nobody is taking the electrons off the system, the system shorts out. Like a garden hose that was plugged, eventually it would break. So you're giving those electrons away to Quebec; in fact, you're paying them to take them.

Now, the problem with the system we have is that there's not enough interconnect capacity. We have only got about 3,000 megawatts of interconnect capacity with Quebec and Manitoba. Quebec and Manitoba have hydroelectric power. That's the cheapest power; they're not going to buy our expensive electrons, especially renewable.

I think the renewable program is a good idea. As far as the coal goes, it was our plan, remember, in 2014. You still haven't closed them and I put to you now you're not going to close them. You're going to be using biomass. The reason is, when you have generation of 5,000 megawatts at the Nanticoke plant, a huge coal plant—it's all been tooled. The mercury is out of it. They've got par-

ticulate matter under control. They've got a lot of stuff that they could do there. You're going to actually convert those plants to, I believe, biomass. Because how do you get the electrons out of the plant? With a transmission system. That grid is worth billions. There's not enough gas in the area to gasify the plant. I believe those plants will be used. I put that on the record here today. It'll be another broken promise.

You shouldn't promise things which you don't deliver. Now, here's the deal: You say, "We didn't know." Well, if you didn't know, you shouldn't have promised. If you promised and you knew, then you lied. That's how it works. In this system here, there are experts who have said these very things I'm saying.

Now, what does it have to do with this bill? If you want to start on the bill that we're talking about, Bill 75, it would be important to read a couple of other documents. Our plan during the election was to eliminate the Ontario Power Authority—not discredit it but cancel it. Why? Its mandate was about 70 people, experts, Ph.D.s, and all the rest of it, to figure out what the supply mix should be. They've presented the supply mix report.

But the Environmental Commissioner had a few things to say about it in his recent report. It's worth looking at. It's *Restoring Balance: A Review of the First Three Years of the Green Energy Act*. It's very much worth reading. The reason I say that is that there are a few disappointments in there. I should say this is not me, this is Gord Miller. They'll probably fire him now. This is what it says—and the Minister of the Environment is here. It starts at Ontario's "culture of conservation." Remember that fancy term they used during the election, the "culture of conservation"? They completely failed—completely failed. Read his report; it tells you. But it goes on to say that there are a few reports that are missing. He's looking for them—and now they're never going to be seen.

I'm going to read this here because it's worth looking at. It's near the back of the report. Here it is, on page 46, under "Electricity." It says, "In February 2011, the Minister of Energy issued a supply mix directive (replacing previous supply mix directives of 2006 and 2008)"—so they said there was a supply mix. Now it's so screwed up, they don't know what's going on. Technically, they have way too much renewable. In fact, that's another whole fiasco. We've got people who have invested money and now they're going to lose it—"directing the OPA to prepare an updated integrated power system plan (IPSP). In a February 2011 letter, the Minister of Energy indicated he anticipated that the plan would be delivered to the board later in 2011. At the time of writing our report, the IPSP"—integrated power system plan—"had still not been filed with the OEB.

"The years of delay in producing an IPSP raises the question of whether it is still relevant." That's how fast the system is changing, so be very careful.

Now what are you doing under this bill? What you're actually doing is you're getting rid of the OPA, and the integrated power system plan remains out there.

Here's what the preamble of the bill says, which causes me great concern in the context of us asking questions for the last two months or more on the Ornge helicopter affair. Here's what this Bill 75 says. It says, "The bill amends the Electricity Act, 1998"—which I made all my remarks about—"by amalgamating the Independent Electricity System Operator ('IESO') and the Ontario Power Authority ('OPA') and by continuing them as the Ontario Electricity System Operator ('OESO')." So the OPA and the IESO are gone.

I believe they should just get rid of the OPA. Here's the point: These companies, these employees—and you've gone from about 75 employees to, I think, 400 employees with the OPA. What are they doing? They can't even get the report in. I think there's way too much meddling from the ministry itself. The OPA is integrating all this renewable energy and now you've got a glut of it and you can't get rid of it. You can't actually balance the system, if you know what I'm saying. The system has to be in balance. You can't run your system on wind turbines. It just doesn't work.

In fact, I'll tell you what's new. There's an academic report; you might read it. I had someone call me from the University of Toronto. I had lunch with them and they explained it to me. The future is this: They're going to take off-peak renewable energy at night and create hydrogen or some other gas. The issue then is, how do you store hydrogen? Now they're talking about the pipelines being part of the ability to store some of this stuff. That's innovative, and that I support, because why? You can't store electricity, and this physics professor over here knows that. And you can't run nuclear up and down; you run it or it's off. It's either on or off; otherwise, you wear the system out.

If you look at this thing here, what it says is that the board of this new organization, the OESO, is required to ensure—listen carefully, now—"that there is an effective separation of functions and activities of the OESO relating to its" marketing and "procurement and contract management activities." Uh-oh. Look at it. They're even saying it in here. They're telling Premier McGuinty and his cabinet—hopefully it will be Tim Hudak and our cabinet by the time this thing gets unwound. I'd say there's a problem here; it's called subrogation, and you need to separate—it's like the Ontario Securities Commission setting the rules and doing the enforcement. It's a natural conflict. You've got to subrogate the two functions, actually. In fact, I think you're going wrong here because the Ontario Energy Board is the rightful quasi-judicial body to make these decisions. I think you would find some support for this openness, transparency and accountability from Tim Hudak and our caucus.

I say that openly because we believe—we have a document out, and I put this document out for discussion. It's very important. I encourage people, if you can't get one, to go online. You can get it. Or give me a call; I'll get you one—or our critic Vic Fedeli, a marvellous guy and very into this. In fact, he's responsible for this report. It's called *Pathways to Prosperity*.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome this morning, all the way from Punkeydoodles Corners, in the riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, Garry Ruttan and Sheila Hannon, proud parents of our legislative intern, Craig Ruttan. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome my colleagues and friends from Humber College, Beth Brown and Barb Kennedy, who have come to visit the House.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to have two garage owners from my riding, Gino Sciscente and Sam Vukadinovic. They are here to witness proceedings.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to welcome the family of page Andrew Johnson, from the great riding of Kitchener Centre. We have Angela and William Johnson, Andrew's parents, and Luke and Emma Johnson, Andrew's brother and sister, who I believe are former pages. So we welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park Ashokkuma Patel, who is the father of Gopi Patel, a legislative page here at Queen's Park from the great riding of York South–Weston. I would also like to welcome Shawn Cabral, also a resident of York South–Weston and a student at Dante Alighieri high school. Welcome.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would like to offer a welcome to Kristen Vattr, who is the mother of page Louis Vattr.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to introduce today Wayne and Sandra Martin, who are here from Guelph and who won lunch with me at a charity auction for the wonderful Guelph General Hospital foundation.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, they're stuck in traffic. They'll be here soon. I have a school coming. St. Anthony Catholic French Immersion School from London is on their way. Welcome, when they show up.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to introduce two members of my family who are visiting from New Delhi, India, today here at Queen's Park: Triveni Naqvi and Iman Naqvi, and they're accompanied by my parents, Anwar and Qaisar Naqvi. Welcome to Queen's Park and to Canada.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature today students and staff from École Immaculée-Conception in St. Catharines, who are here to tour Queen's Park today. Bienvenue.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome Mr. Esmail Parsi-nejad, sitting in the Speaker's gallery.

MEMBER FOR ST. CATHARINES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no further introductions, the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that every party be allowed to speak for up to five minutes in tribute of 35 years of service for the member for St. Catharines, the Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Jim Bradley.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader has requested up to five minutes for each party to speak on the anniversary of the member from St. Catharines. Do I hear agreement?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am sorry, I heard a no.

All in favour say "aye."

All in favour say "no."

I believe the ayes have it.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, 35 years ago this Saturday, James Joseph Bradley was elected to this Legislature to represent the people of St. Catharines. That day marked the beginning of a truly remarkable political career.

The member for St. Catharines has won 10 consecutive elections. In those elections, he has captured, on average, 50% of the votes cast. He has served in six different critic responsibilities. He has served as House leader in government and in opposition. He has been minister in six different portfolios, and he has been our party's interim leader.

While Jim has technically served for 21 years in opposition and 14 in government, in reality, during all those years, he has been in opposition. Speaker, you will know that Jim's trademark way of weighing in on a caucus discussion around any new government initiative is to begin by saying, "At the risk of being seen as the skunk at the garden party...."

Jim was first elected at a time when it seemed the only thing protecting Liberals in Ontario were the game laws. But Jim's constituents saw something in him they never lost sight of: a man of good character, someone who, over the years, has only grown in judgment, perspective and good humour. Jim takes his responsibilities seriously, but not himself. He's proud to serve in government, but he's most respectful of the role of opposition. Jim embraces his responsibilities here at Queen's Park, but his devotion is to the people of St. Catharines.

Jim's mind is always as open to new ideas about progressive politics as it is tightly closed to progress in technology. For Jim, progress in information gathering is to keep adding individual sheets of notes to the yellowed stack he stores in his breast pocket.

I believe the responsibility of those of us lucky enough to serve in this place is to represent Ontarians at their very best. Jim has been doing that every day for the last 35 years. He has been decent, hard-working and respectful. He has been helpful to those in need, demanding of the strong, and determined to build a strong and caring society for all Ontarians. He has resisted cynicism and steadfastly embraced the noble ideal of public service. More than that, he has nurtured that idealism in others.

You may know, Speaker, that every year Jim hosts a dinner for current and former staffers. As many as 40

show up. Some worked for him 30 years ago. They return to remember a special time in their young lives and to thank Jim for teaching them values that sustained them throughout life.

Jim's entire adult life has been devoted to helping people—not to getting, but to giving. Jim loves this Legislature and the workings of democracy, and he believes that we in this place can make a difference. And he has a record of achievement to prove it.

As an Ontarian and as a father, I am especially proud of Jim's leadership in tackling acid rain, bringing the blue box into the world, and now acting to protect our Great Lakes.

Mr. Speaker, if we look around the world, it is impossible not to come to the conclusion that we Ontarians are privileged, and with that privilege comes responsibility—the responsibility to keep making our communities, our province, our country and hopefully our world a better place. For 35 unbroken years, Jim Bradley has assumed that responsibility with enthusiasm and with integrity.

He has proven to be invulnerable at home, and he's closing in on venerable here. You'll notice I didn't say that he is venerable; I said he was closing in on venerable. The problem with being venerable is that it puts you beyond the reach of the leader.

Let me close with this: Cicero said that nothing is more noble, nothing more venerable, than faithfulness and truth. Jim, on behalf of your colleagues and the people of Ontario, I thank you for 35 years of service, throughout which you have been faithful to us and true to yourself. Thank you.

Applause.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to recognize the member of St. Catharines on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of his election to this place. It was 1977 when Jim was first elected here. Jimmy Carter was in the White House. Knowlton Nash was on *The National*. Donna Summer dominated disco. A single computer would fill an entire room—in fact, the last bit of technology Jim Bradley invested in. Monte McNaughton, Rob Leone, Michael Harris, Jagmeet Singh—I don't think they were even born yet. And Jim's favourite hockey team, the Buffalo Sabres, were only one or two seasons away from winning the Stanley Cup—still are.

By the way, 1977 was also Her Majesty the Queen's Silver Jubilee, and here she goes again trying to steal the proper spotlight away from Jim this year with her Diamond Jubilee.

After 1977, Jim Bradley rose through the benches very rapidly, and of course for good reason. He was a man very much dedicated to public life as a teacher, a city councillor before that, always involved in his community, caring very deeply for the good people of St. Catharines. He's a good and decent man. Coming from Niagara, a bordering riding, and following the politics before I even

got here, to me as an individual, Jim Bradley's name always stood in the Liberal ranks among that pantheon of celebrated Liberal names and cabinet ministers. I think of folks like Ian Scott, Sean Conway, Bob Nixon and Jim Bradley. They were among the major political lights of the Peterson government, and I count Jim similarly as a man of stature and dignity.

The Premier mentioned the blue box program. When Jim Bradley advanced the blue box program across the province, it was highly controversial at the time. Now it's a program embraced right across our province and part of everyday life. The acid rain debate was also controversial at the time. Those were victories here under Jim Bradley's leadership as environment minister, as were "polluter pays" fines, to name a few. Jim has taken on a number of cabinet portfolios, but I think the smile on his face is always widest when he's carrying his environment briefing binder. And look at the many accomplishments he's had.

Ian, Sean and Bob—great careers; no longer here. Jim Bradley still is. He has not just dedicated the most productive years of his life to this place and his constituents, but he's dedicated virtually all his adult life to public service, and despite our occasional differences, we're all the better for it.

I will say Jim always asks about my daughter, Miller. He asks about what he calls his favourite Harris whiz kid, my wife, Debbie: "How is she doing?"

I'm going to let this secret out a little bit here, too, Jim. There was a bit of a—"troika" is probably not the right word—detente between Jim Bradley, Peter Kormos and myself: three different parties, and we all served area ridings for some time. Of course, in our discussions Peter Kormos was the model of centrist moderation, Jim was the wild-eyed gambler, and I was always the soft-spoken guy smack in the middle trying to reach compromise wherever I could. But you know what? I appreciated that.

I don't know a better term for it, but Jim also comes from that old school. No matter what your political party, if there's an announcement in Niagara, for example, in my riding, Jim always gives credit to the local member. He respects their position and the honour we all share here, the unique 107 in the entire province of Ontario to have the privilege of sitting in his place. Jim would never let party colours get in the way of that. I respect that, and I appreciate that. That tells me there's still honour in this place, there's still dignity in this place, and there are still people who understand the importance of the role we play, no matter what party we represent. Jim embodies that. We appreciate that, and we respect that.

At times, when folks will be watching at home, those in the audience today may lose faith in the political process, may get a dose of cynicism about politicians. They need look no further than Jim Bradley and his career for reassurance. There is decency in this place. There is honour. There is dignity.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I thank the distinguished member for St. Catharines for all these things and more. On behalf of the Ontario PC Party, Jim, con-

gratulations on 35 years of making an incredible impact on St. Catharines, Niagara and our beloved province of Ontario. Congratulations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I speak on behalf of the New Democrats in the words that I want to offer on behalf of the member from St. Catharines. I have known Jim for the last 22 years. That is a long, long, long time. I want to say that—I am careful, because we're not speaking about a man who has retired; he's still here. As I listened to the Premier and Mr. Hudak, the leader of the official opposition, I thought, "You're giving him praise for a man who's just retired," and I say, "But he's still here." So my comments are related to the member who is still here. I say the reason why he's still here is because we have no pension. It does take about 50 years to have a pension that is half of what the federal members earn. People make fun of this; I understand. A whole lot of people in the audience think that we do have a pension—God bless—but we don't. So we are still here, earning a wage, trying to make sure that when we retire we have a decent pension, whatever we're getting from the government.

One of the things that Jim and I have in common is that we're not very good with the latest technology—we're not. But at least I have a BlackBerry over your black book, which I have learned to use ever so painfully and slowly, but I'm getting there. You realize that without it, we're in the Dark Ages. Jim, please, you've got to get on to it, like I have.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's a tiny one, I understand. How do you get your fingers on that?

Jim is a man who respects opposition, and we have been in opposition together. We respect government, and we respect the role of opposition members. That's something that we all have in common here—at least, Jim and I and many others in this place: We know that in a democracy, we need all the different players to do their job. Government has a job to do and the opposition parties have a job to do. He used to remind us of that every time he was here, and he reminds us of that every time he is there as well. For that, I respect you, Jim.

I want to say that longevity has a lot to do with intelligence, sensitivity, resilience, knowing how to respect the people in the riding, knowing how to respect the people here. One doesn't last that long unless you have those abilities, those rare abilities, to be able to reflect your constituents over the years, to be able to change with them, and to be able to work in a way that allows you to resist all the political changes—including the changes of the 1990s and the changes of 1995. That has a lot to do with your personality, the respect that you give to the people in your riding and the respect you have for this institution.

Jim, on behalf of New Democrats, we respect the work that you do. You are a good Liberal, and I want to say that, because there are times when I don't say that of many Liberals. You are one of the finest Liberals this government has. On behalf of us all, thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member for St. Catharines.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'll take a moment to respond. I know we are eager to get to the cut and thrust of question period, where all the nice things that the people in the gallery have heard today tend to disappear into the background.

I want to simply thank the members of the Legislative Assembly for the very kind round of applause that you accorded me a couple of days ago and again today, and to thank the Premier for his very kind words, the Leader of the Opposition, and my friend Rosario representing the New Democratic Party.

1050

I have actually sat in this Legislature with five different people whose parents have been in the Legislature. John Yakabuski's father, Paul Yakabuski, was one of them; Frank Miller was another, Norm Miller's father, who served as a Premier of this province as well; Dalton McGuinty Sr., the father of the Premier; I remember Elinor Caplan, who is the mother of David Caplan; and Shelley Martel, whose father was Elie Martel. It's interesting, if you are here for a certain period of time, you see the next generation serving in the Legislature, and each one of them having the marvellous attributes that brought their parents to the Legislature and that desire to serve others.

I've also—I'll put it this way; I don't want to insult the Premier—gone through seven Premiers now, from Premier Davis to Premier McGuinty, and again, I have an admiration for each one of them. It's fascinating, though, when people ask about a perspective. I have a good deal of admiration—and people, usually when they're Premier, have been in the opposition, but not in Mr. Davis's case, because the Conservatives were in power forever in those particular days; the people across would say the good old days. But I have a great admiration for opposition leaders. Our Premier would tell you this as well, and anybody who served before they became Premier: One of the toughest jobs that you can have is as an opposition leader. You may be speaking to four people in some basement on a Friday afternoon. You may be going to a lot of events that you are obligated to as the leader of a political party, and it would be nice to be home with your feet up and with members of the family around. So I have a great deal of respect for all members of the Legislature.

My observation has been that regardless of affiliation, regardless of riding, overwhelmingly, the number of people who run for public office are good people. We often don't know each other in our initial days in the Legislature. The more you learn about people—the more you sit down with them informally, the more you learn about their life story—the more you recognize what good people they are.

We are partisan in this House; that's part of being a member of the Legislature. But what you find is that people rally around one another in times of sickness, in times of death, in times of stress within family. You'll find that members of the Legislature gather together and

pay tribute to those and are assisting those and understanding those who go through what human beings go through.

All members here recognize as well—and I can tell you, I most assuredly do—the importance of good staff. We are the ones who appear on television, we are the ones who may be on the front page of a newspaper, but we are very reliant upon good staff. I have been blessed with extremely good staff here at Queen's Park as an MPP, in my ministerial duties and, as we all know, back at the constituency office, where they do a yeoman's job there. It is the front line. Many of us would figure we could not do the job that our constituency office staff do. Actually, the Premier has been annoyed because I plant them all over the government, people who have once worked for me, even in the Premier's office, as spies, and they tend to do a very good job—not of spying.

The other thing I want to mention—this is hard to believe as well—is that there have been members of this assembly who have been pages before. In the last Parliament I was sitting in, two of the people sitting here in cabinet with me were actually pages when I was elected. They were bringing me water back in those days. One is the government House leader, who's sitting beside me today. He was a page in those days. I had a feeling he might well be a member of Parliament at one time.

But again, I'm extremely grateful to all of you. Speaker, I should tell you there have been at least 12 Speakers since I have been in this position as well, and they've all been very dedicated to the job and we've enjoyed having them.

It's a privilege to serve. It's a privilege few people have. I think the Leader of the Opposition mentioned this. We have something a little different in the Niagara Peninsula, perhaps—I don't know; it may happen in other places that Tim made reference to—and that is that those of us who represent the Niagara area, you don't hear us attack one another personally. We certainly have different views on different issues, but you'll find that we rally together when trying to defend the interests of the Niagara Peninsula. So when Cindy would be at a meeting or Tim would be at a meeting or Kim or Peter Kormos who was there for a number of years, and Mel Swart before that, a number of us—by the way, a person some of you here would know, although he's been gone for a period of time, is Bob Welch. Bob Welch held a lot of portfolios: He was Deputy Premier; he was government House leader. He was a mentor to me. He sat on the opposite side. I sat most of my time in opposition, some of it in government, but Bob Welch took me under his wing. There's no need to do that, because in politics—one of the detriments of this job is that one of our jobs is to make the other person look bad. None of us like that, but that's part of the responsibility. Bob Welch took me under his wing and gave me a lot of good advice, and I'm extremely grateful to him for that. He's passed on. By the way, when he did pass on, there was a huge funeral, with people from all political parties there.

So thank you very much for your very, very kind words. I enjoy this place. I hope to be here for a period of

time into the future. That is always determined by the electorate or by health or something of that nature. I like each and every member of this House and always have. I wish you all well in your personal lives and your career. Thank you for your kindness.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Can the member for St. Catharines remind me what his point of order was?

I just wanted to do a quick echo, and that is to simply say that I personally thank all the members for their very kind words. Their representations are because of the member from St. Catharines' personal dedication to the job, and I thank you for that. It's on behalf of all of us that we speak, and for all of us, in terms of the dedication that you all give to this job, day in and day out—not just in this House but outside of the House. So thank you so much.

It is now—

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, you can go ahead and do that. That's fine.

And dare I say, because there's so much love in the House today, that it's now time for question period?

ORAL QUESTIONS

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, this entire week I've talked to you about our concern over the hollowing out of the manufacturing sector of the province of Ontario under your expensive energy policies, higher taxes and increased red tape.

We were sad that GM announced recently 2,000 layoffs, with the Impala and the Equinox, which had always been made in Ontario, now moving to Michigan and to Tennessee.

Yesterday, Premier, General Motors briefed the PC caucus on why they decided to move production of the Impala to Michigan and the Equinox to a reopened plant in Tennessee. They detailed for us input costs increasing, particularly electricity and regulatory administration.

Premier, under your government, electricity rates are now the highest in competing states and provinces for industry. Isn't it time to get off that course and embrace our ideas for more reliable, affordable hydro so that businesses will create jobs again?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm delighted to take the question. I had been hoping my colleague was going to ask that we dispense with question period today, given the tone and the mood that we had set a moment ago, but that is not to be, and probably rightfully so.

I'm very proud of the fact that Ontario remains the number one producer of cars in North America. That is a standing we have achieved on our watch. We have worked hard to achieve that particular status, especially when the auto sector found itself up against it, in the context of this most recent and terrible recession. When

they looked to us for support, Speaker, and we looked to this Legislature for support, we did not find that within the ranks of the opposition. So we worked with Prime Minister Harper, we worked with the Obama administration and we put forward a support package that ensured the continuing survival and growth and continuing prosperity of our auto sector here in Ontario.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier misses the entire point. The reason we have the largest auto production in Ontario is because we had reliable, affordable hydro; we had a productive workforce; we had competitive taxes; and we had a regulatory environment that was pro-jobs and pro-growth. I was proud to be part of a PC government that was number one in North America in job creation and investment.

It reminds me of the old line, "How do you get a small business in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario? You buy a large business and watch it shrink."

We're on the wrong path. It's time to reverse course, Premier. We put out good ideas: reliable, affordable hydro; to get away from your expensive Feed-in Tariff program; to say to business that we're open for investment again; and to change the attitude of government that says, "Get out of their way, get behind them and make Ontario number one again in North America for job creation." Why won't you take up our ideas?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague that we did cut corporate taxes, we did eliminate the capital tax in Ontario, we have reduced small business taxes, and we eliminated tens of thousands of regulatory burdens that confronted our businesses.

To be specific with respect to our auto sector, since the recession, GM has invested in a new transmission line in St. Catharines, GM has invested to expand capacity at their CAMI assembly plant in Ingersoll, Toyota has invested in 400 new jobs at Woodstock, Ford has invested in a third shift at the Essex engine plant, Honda has added 400 jobs, and Chrysler has invested \$27 million in the Etobicoke casting plant. That represents hundreds and hundreds of new jobs.

The real reason that we're doing so well in Ontario when it comes to auto production is in fact the quality of our workforce. We are without compare in that regard, and my honourable colleague should acknowledge that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary? The member from Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Premier, the government's function is to create an environment that attracts jobs. Wednesday last, I met with the senior management of General Motors, who stated that there are two key areas that make Ontario non-competitive. They stated that the price of energy and the levels of taxation make Ontario non-competitive.

Premier, what do you plan to do to keep good-paying jobs in Ontario and make Ontario competitive for taxation and energy costs for major employers like General Motors in Oshawa?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As my honourable colleague might imagine, I've had several opportunities over the past several years to meet with representatives of all of our auto companies here in Ontario. I've also travelled south of the border and travelled to places as far as Davos, Switzerland, in order to secure new investments here in Ontario.

There are competitiveness challenges around the world; we've entered into a new era of globalization. But I can say once again: The reason—and I would ask that my honourable colleagues opposite acknowledge this—that we are number one in North America and that we've held that position for nine years running is because we have an outstanding workforce, a competitive business environment—but, I would argue, most importantly, we have a strong partnership between this government and the auto sector here in Ontario.

WAGE RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier. The Premier's words are cold comfort to the 600,000 unemployed women and men in our province; the 300,000 who have lost good, middle-class jobs in industry.

It's not simply GM; that's bad enough. Caterpillar in London shed jobs and moved to Indiana; Xstrata in Timmins, across to Quebec; John Deere outside of Welland moved down to Wisconsin; BF Goodrich moved out of Kitchener-Waterloo, I believe, into the States.

These are good, middle-class jobs. What this also means is, when those good jobs leave our province, there is no demand for workers, and wages stagnate as a result.

Premier, Ontario's wage growth for families has gone up 0.1% from last year. One tenth of one per cent: That's dead last in all of Canada. Premier, isn't this evidence of Ontario's economic decline under your failed economic policies when wage rates have gone up 0.1%? Isn't that the definition of failure and misguided economic policy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm just a lot more positive about our province, about its state today, and very optimistic about our continuing growth long into the future. The fact of the matter is, we've created 340,000 net new jobs since the recession.

I'll give you just one example. Back in 2003, they had 250 people working in the Bombardier assembly plant in Thunder Bay; today they have 1,300 people working there, and they're looking for about 160 more. That's just one example of one business that continues to grow here in Ontario.

I'd ask my honourable colleague to take a look at that particular example and take a look at the dozens of others that are there and demonstrate that, working together, we are continuing to grow this economy, and on the whole, we are continuing to create net new jobs for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, the Premier's Pollyanna attitude about Ontario's private sector economy demonstrates a man who has become dramatically out of touch

with what's happening in communities across our province and at kitchen tables.

Saskatchewan, for the first time in history, has now moved ahead of Ontario when it comes to average incomes. We're falling farther and farther behind. Wage growth in Saskatchewan, 6%; British Columbia, 3.8%; Newfoundland, 4.7%; Prince Edward Island, 3.9%; Alberta, 3.3%; and Ontario, dead last, 0.1%. It's actually even behind inflation in Canada, and inflation is at low levels.

This means that families have lost jobs, and those who have jobs are falling farther and farther behind, Premier. I don't know if I need to shake you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Tim Hudak:—evidence, but families are concerned, and it's time to take a new course: lower, more competitive taxes; competitive, affordable hydro; and an attitude that says—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—get out of the way of business, get behind them and encourage investment so our great province of Ontario will lead again.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Another reminder that when I say "Thank you," that is the end of your question or your answer.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to remind my honourable colleague that it's 340,000 net new jobs that we've created here in Ontario since the recession, which is more than any other province.

I can say as well, by way of an additional specific example, let's take a look at Telus. In 2000, Telus employed I think fewer than 100 people in Ontario; today they employ 8,000 in Ontario. Last Friday, they made an announcement—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: They don't like to hear good news, Speaker; I understand that. Apparently, they're well educated with respect to what's happening in other provinces, but they might want to learn a thing or two about how we're doing so well here in Ontario.

Last Friday, Telus announced—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While I'm asking you, you're still heckling. Stop.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, the good news hurts those folks opposite me, but they're going to have to hear it nonetheless.

On Friday last, Telus announced \$650 million by way of a new investment in Ontario to create 900 more new jobs for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, you know who's hurting in Ontario? The 2,000 families who lost jobs at GM, the 600 families who lost jobs at—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—those at John Deere. We've lost 300,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector under their economic policies. It is being hollowed out. It helps to build a strong, secure middle class when you have good jobs in resources and manufacturing.

They've created 300,000 jobs in government, and we on this side are very concerned about the reality out there of public sector haves and private sector have-nots. Just the other day, an arbitrator gave TTC workers an 8% wage increase. So much for his public sector wage freeze—8%. It's not fair. It's not right.

We need to stimulate the private sector. We need to grow jobs. We need a public sector wage freeze. That's the way forward for our province so we can grow again, we can create jobs and make Ontario number one in North America for job creation, not number 10 in Canada.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague purports to speak on behalf of the auto workers and their families. I think we should listen to a representative of the CAW, who in fact represents auto workers and those families. This is what he said. Ken Lewenza said the following: "Mr. Hudak's approach puts ideology before economics.... If this policy were actually implemented, Ontario would never win another major capital investment by" any "major automaker. That would be a disaster for every auto-dependent community in the province...."

"The international reality is that governments have to be at the table, or else these investments" just "don't happen."

I agree with Mr. Ken Lewenza. That's why we're going to continue to work together, both with labour and with management, to grow the auto sector here in Ontario.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Last week I raised concerns about the government's 300-page omnibus bill that grants cabinet sweeping powers to hold a fire sale of public government assets.

Can the Premier confirm that the government now concedes that the bill in fact does exactly that, and will it be amended?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I did in fact indicate the precise opposite yesterday in scrum. The third party particularly have expressed concerns with the language in one part of the budget. With respect to that, we will be

bringing forward amendments which I think will satisfy the concerns raised by the leader of the third party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last week, when I raised the same concerns that the Minister of Finance dismissed at the time—he dismissed them, and he said that my arguments were full of holes. This raises serious concerns about the changes that this government is still planning to go ahead with. Is the government planning to sell off ServiceOntario? If so, we would like to know to whom.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would refer the leader of the third party to the 2011 budget, where we outlined a process to determine if in fact we could provide better service to the public. In the 2012 budget, we tabled as part of that our decision to move forward with the privatization of the final one third. I'd remind the leader of the third party that approximately two thirds of those services are delivered privately in Ontario. We require an additional \$3 billion in investment to enhance intellectual and computer technology. Accordingly, having done the first two thirds, we're proceeding with the last third.

I suspect you wouldn't know the difference between the publicly and privately offered one if you walked into separate different—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What's very apparent is that the government doesn't know who it's planning to sell ServiceOntario to, and that raises some very serious concerns for us over here.

Yesterday, the committee got a legal opinion that was offered that if ServiceOntario was sold to an American company, "personal information of Ontarians could be provided to US national security agencies under compulsion of the US Patriot Act." Can the government confirm that American companies won't be able to buy up ServiceOntario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I can confirm that there will be a full and transparent process associated with the final one third of this particular transaction.

I can't predict who will or will not be successful in that process. It would start with a request for information. It would be followed by a request for proposals. Any proposal would go through a significant scrutiny that would likely address the types of concerns the leader of the third party has raised. We would ultimately make a determination, based on bids, as to which one would be successful.

This is an appropriate process to transform the way we're doing government. Our preference is to keep money focused on hospitals and schools. Where service can be better delivered privately, it should be delivered privately.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My second question is for the Premier. This morning, a security breach at ServiceOntario kiosks has people across Ontario thinking about these very issues. They need to know that their personal

information is safe and that it's secure. Today, the minister is telling them that in some of these privatized kiosks, it actually might not be. Why should people support further sell-offs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: ServiceOntario was advised by debit card partners of security violations at kiosk locations in the GTA. It is suspected that the attempts made were to gain access to key credit and debit card data that allows replication of debit and credit cards. There is no indication that any personal details held by the Ontario government have been compromised. I directed our officials to temporarily suspend all 72 kiosks across the province. This was done as a cautious measure to allow staff to inspect all kiosks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, it sounds like the minister is saying, "Just trust us," and that the government is saying, "Just trust us." But people across Ontario have a hard time doing that and justifiably so.

Yesterday, in a written submission, Ontario's Ombudsman noted that his office has been losing its power to provide oversight and to protect the public for years under this government's administration. He said, "Bill 55 is the latest stage in devolution."

After the Ornge debacle, does the government really expect people to believe that less oversight and less accountability is actually going to save us money?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me make it very clear: Kiosks are owned by the Ontario government. They are not private kiosks. As soon as we found out that there was a security violation we took very concrete action. As a cautionary measure we suspended all the kiosks, and I directed all of my staff to go and inspect all kiosks in Ontario before they will come up again. That was taken as a cautionary measure. Based on the information that we have, there's absolutely no violation of personal details held by the Ontario government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Over the last week, people have seen a government that seems to care a lot more about themselves than the people that they're supposed to be representing. They're spending millions and millions of dollars scrapping private power deals in Mississauga and Oakville but won't tell the public exactly how many millions. They spent millions more in the mess at Ornge and hid information about salaries and expenses from the public.

Is this government ready to finally admit that real oversight protects the public and the treasury? If so, will it back off short-sighted schemes that erode public protection and leave people paying more?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: We take security issues very seriously. As soon as we found out, we took very concrete action. We shut down the kiosks, which are publicly owned kiosks, and I have directed my staff to actually inspect each and every kiosk so that there is no violation of those kiosks. We will continue to make sure

that the privacy of information of all Ontarians is protected at all times.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: The deception at Ornge continues. Even the communications department of that organization can't seem to tell the truth. In a desperate attempt to deflect attention—

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: In a desperate attempt to deflect attention from the report of the growing number of emergency calls that Ornge cannot respond to because of understaffing of paramedics and pilots, Ornge issued a media release late yesterday afternoon. That release boasts of a new team at Ornge. It gives inflated information about the number of paramedics and the number of pilots that have been added to the front line.

What it doesn't say is that included in those numbers are pilots who are on extended sick leave, who are in administrative positions and who are nowhere near the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Frank Klees:—front lines. It also makes no mention that Ornge has resorted to renting pilots from Alberta for its air ambulance service.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Frank Klees: Is the minister complicit in this misrepresentation, or is Ornge keeping her in the dark one more time?

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just caution the member that last part was quite close to impugning motive, so I would caution him on that. And a reminder, when I give you the wrap-up, to please wrap up.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know it's hard for the member opposite, but there's very good news at Ornge. I've been talking about the progress that we are making, and I'm very pleased to be able to say that Ornge continues to add to its front-line staff team. There's now a team of 217 paramedics at Ornge. That's 10 more than there were this time last year. We've also got very good news that Ornge currently has 38 airplane pilots; seven more will be coming onboard by mid-July. At that time, they'll be at 98% of their full complement of airplane pilots. In addition, Ornge has 69 helicopters and has recently hired five more, bringing the total to 74 by July. At that time, they'll be at 95% of their complement.

This is great news. I know the member opposite is as pleased as I am with the progress at Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: The minister didn't hear my comment and my question to her. Do you know how many of those numbers that are inflated in that release are actually people on long-term sick leave and who will never be on the front line?

But, Speaker, the spin gets better about this new team. As we know, first, the minister appointed, as president and CEO, a civil servant who has no experience in air

ambulance. It's no surprise that the same release the minister read from spoke about a new roster of people: Bruce Farr, who never worked in an air ambulance service in any capacity and, according to the Ornge news release, will be "indispensable" at Ornge; Robert Giguere, who has never worked anywhere near an air ambulance service in any capacity but who managed to chart Sky-service Airlines into bankruptcy, is now a key player at Ornge; and Wayne Howard, who has no experience in any emergency service, is now the VP.

Only this minister could consider that progress. When will the Premier understand his minister needs some help?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am frankly astonished that the member opposite would not think that Bruce Farr will make a tremendous contribution to Ornge. Let's just see what his history is—a long history of working with the Toronto Emergency Medical Services, EMS. He started as an ambulance driver in Scarborough, moved into the training division, and was eventually promoted to the position of chief of Toronto EMS, a position he held before retiring after 39 years. This man knows ambulance service, Speaker. We're very proud that he has chosen to join the team at Ornge.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Last summer, a young girl died in Windsor, and questions are being raised about the role that Ornge played.

Jamie Lynn Ingham needed to get from Windsor to London for emergency surgery. The hospital called for an air ambulance. They waited for three hours for an Ornge helicopter that never came. The system let down Jamie Lynn, it let down her family, and it let down the dedicated paramedics and pilots at Ornge.

I attended Jamie Lynn's funeral service last July, and I saw the devastation on the faces of her parents, her family, her twin sister, and the devastation that this has caused our community in Windsor.

There are questions that remain—questions that can only be answered by a coroner's inquest. Premier, will you join me in asking the coroner to call an inquest into this tragic case?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it is very important, and I think we owe to the families—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: You resign.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Northumberland will come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We owe the families that have been affected the truth, and I can tell you, the truth can come only with a thorough investigation by people who are non-partisan, who have no political advantage to be gained, people who are committed to the safety of the people of this province.

We know that the coroner of Ontario is informed whenever there is an investigation that results in a death. The coroner is informed. We trust the judgment of the coroner to make professional decisions on which cases

warrant further investigation. We know that the coroner does do that, and we respect that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is: Will the Premier initiate a call directly on this specific case; take the evidence at hand and address this specific case that happened in Windsor? The CEO of Windsor Regional Hospital is voicing his concerns about the patterns that seem to be emerging. David Musy said:

"My concern is we had nine Ornge cases in the past year and in two of them we were given inaccurate information. For those (hospitals) who have not brought forward cases, they should be asking for reviews. We are finding out information a year later that is shocking and disturbing and needs to be fixed."

Speaker, if hospital administrators don't have faith in the government and Ornge to solve this problem, does the Premier agree that the coroner should be called to investigate and will he initiate that call immediately today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the coroner is an independent officer. The coroner gets the information, can request further information and often does request further information. He has the information he needs. He makes a professional judgment.

I urge the member opposite to speak to the member from Nickel Belt. Read the Sudbury Star. The member from Nickel Belt understands what the coroner means when he says of the completed investigations, "There have been no cases in which issues with air ambulance transportation materially affected the course of the patient's illness or injury."

Do not put these families through more pain than they are already going through. Let the coroner do his work.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. David Oraziotti: My question for the Minister of Finance. Minister, as you know, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has introduced a private member's bill that may make it cheaper to purchase auto insurance in his own riding, but at the expense of all other ridings in Ontario, particularly in the north, where this would cost much more.

By removing the use of geographic rating factors in determining rates for auto insurance, the bill would have a huge impact on rural and northern drivers in Ontario. If the bill passes, it's estimated that my constituents would end up paying 30% more for auto insurance. That's an additional \$380 a year. It's clear the bill does not get at the root causes of higher auto insurance rates and was poorly thought out.

Minister, what's our government's plan to ensure that auto insurance rates are fair and affordable?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for his question and for his passionate opposition to a bill that will raise premiums in the southwest, in the north, in the east and, frankly, won't be of any assistance in the greater Toronto area.

The member for Sault Ste. Marie and other members of this caucus have worked over the years on auto insurance reforms that have stabilized the price of auto insurance and kept increases below the level of inflation. In fact, just in this most recent quarter we had another regulatory rate reduction—a very modest rate reduction—and we've appointed an anti-fraud task force.

The steps we've taken are steps in the right direction that will keep insurance premiums reasonable for all Ontarians, unlike the NDP, who wants to raise premiums for most Ontarians in a plan that frankly will be a total wreck for the delivery of insurance in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. David Oraziotti: Minister, I want to thank you for the work you're doing on auto insurance, but I'm also very concerned that this flawed bill poses serious safety concerns. Specifically, the legislation limits the definition of "driving safety record" to actual accidents, which would mean that if a driver were stopped for impaired driving, running a red light or street racing but did not get into an accident, their premium would not be affected.

In addition, the bill does not take into account the make, model and year of the car, so that drivers with less expensive, more modest vehicles will end up subsidizing the premiums of those with luxury vehicles and sports cars. Given the proposed elimination of geographic ratings, the safety concerns, and shifting costs to drivers with more modest vehicles, I fully expect northern NDP MPPs, like the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, to vote against this flawed legislation.

Minister, what do the experts have to say about Bill 45?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Sault Ste. Marie, who has kept this fight alive to try to prevent an increase in insurance premiums for northerners, for people in the southwest and for all Ontarians.

The chorus of people who are supporting him is growing every day. I'd like to read to the House a quote from the president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association when speaking about this particular bill, the NDP insurance bill: "Safe drivers subsidizing dangerous drivers is an outcome that the OPP Association cannot support. If successful, this bill will punish law-abiding drivers so that dangerous drivers and drivers with poor driving habits can pay less for insurance in this province."

I urge the NDP members from the north, don't punish your constituents. Stand up for your constituents. Don't support a 30% increase. Agree with MADD and agree with the Ontario Provincial Police Association and the strong member from Sault Ste. Marie.

1130

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question is for the Minister of Health. Speaker, by now the minister should be aware of the heartbreaking and tragic situation in Windsor of the death of Jamie Lynn Ingham. Jamie was a

six-year-old girl who died while waiting for Ornge air ambulance to respond. While Jamie Lynn's family waited frantically for an Ornge air ambulance to transport Jamie to London for emergency surgery, we now know Ornge air ambulance was never even dispatched. After a three-hour delay, doctors at Windsor hospital were shocked when Ornge's medical transport team arrived from London in a taxi. Dumbfounded after losing three crucial hours that could have saved Jamie's life, doctors had no choice but to send Jamie Lynn to Detroit via a municipal land ambulance, where she, sadly, died.

Minister, are you prepared to look the Ingham family in the eye and repeat your spin lines that Ornge is a world-class service and that your decisive action is working?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I have said, every case is a human tragedy. Every case has a family that is grieving the loss of a loved one.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland-Quinte West will come to order. Second time.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That is why we owe them the answers to their questions. We owe them an answer. We owe them the truth. I am not qualified, the member opposite is not qualified, to give the answer to that family.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is regrettable that we have to get into personalizing towards each other. Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I rely on people who have no partisan interests, who are not looking for political gain. I rely on the chief coroner of the province of Ontario to use his professional judgment to determine what the cause of death is.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland-Quinte West is now warned. Finish; 10 seconds.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we have a process in place. The process is working. I urge the member opposite not to use tragedy for political gain.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Speaker, in the minister's own words, she isn't qualified. I honestly do not know how the minister can sleep at night. It's clear that the minister's failure to oversee Ornge has left Ontario's air ambulance service in shambles. It's unconscionable to think that critical-care air ambulance paramedics are taking taxis to respond to life-and-death situations. This would be laughable if only the consequences were not so serious and tragic. The minister not only owes the Ingham family an apology or an explanation, but she does owe some words for her failures.

I ask her, now that we know of the death of a child on her watch due to Ornge's inability to respond, and since she refuses to listen to front-line emergency workers or

our party, will she now at least listen to the CEO of Windsor Regional Hospital? Will she admit that she owes an apology to the family and will she write to the coroner under her signature and ask for a coroner's inquest into Jamie Lynn's untimely death?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the coroner of the province of Ontario, the chief coroner, is informed of every single case that the ministry is required by law to inform him of. We inform the coroner. The coroner collects all of the facts. I challenge the member opposite. He cannot possibly know all of the facts. Mr. Musyj, the CEO of Windsor Regional Hospital, has written to the coroner, has requested more information. That is exactly the process that should be followed. This is not a political debate. This is not about political gain. This is about human lives and working to make the system stronger.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Attorney General. Toronto and the province watch in disbelief as more details emerge surrounding the Eaton Centre shooting and the perpetrator. We've found out that Mr. Husbands was out on bail and under house arrest for a sexual assault charge since 2010. Two years later, and Mr. Husbands has not gone through the court system. As a matter of fact, he was due to appear in court on those charges in June of this year. Why is this government allowing for justice to be delayed?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, once again, what happened last weekend was a clear tragedy. Our thoughts are with the victims and we hope all of them make a speedy and full recovery.

You know the matter is before the courts. It's my understanding that the trial you are talking about actually started last fall and is set to continue again this June and, for a variety of reasons, has not continued in a more active fashion mainly due to issues related to the fact that the accused simply wasn't able to be in court on a number of different occasions.

As you know, bail is set by judges and JPs in this province, based on criminal law set by the federal government. I can assure all Ontarians, by the way, that our hard-working police know exactly who is on bail at any given time. As a matter of fact, our bail enforcement units—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. John Gerretsen: —and those police officers are right here in the city of Toronto as well. Those units basically look after those people who are on bail and make sure that they comply with the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

I've noticed that there is some heckling coming from people who are sitting in spots that—if they thought they

could flip around, I still recognize the voice, just to let you know.

Supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Minister, this calls into question the quality or efficiency of the Justice on Target program. It has not reached its targets. In fact, at Etobicoke, Old City Hall and College Park, the number of days to reach the disposition in a case has actually increased. At College Park, for example, the figure jumped to 290 days in 2010 from 221 in 2007. So we have seen a substantial increase of about 31%.

We're also concerned about who is on bail and whether or not the minister knows who is on bail. Is the minister willing to admit that instead of improving the court system, the delays are getting longer and longer and the system is simply not working here in Ontario?

Hon. John Gerretsen: The reality is that for some 18 years the number of appearances required in the average case rose dramatically. It was four years ago that the Justice on Target program was adopted in most courts, where the judiciary worked together with the crown attorneys, worked together with the defence bar, worked together with the legal aid lawyers who are in court and worked together with the victims of crime, and the numbers are actually coming down. Province-wide, there were 500,000 fewer appearances last year for the same number of charges than before. The numbers perhaps have not reached where we had wanted them to be, which is a 30% decrease over the four years, but they are tracking down in most jurisdictions. I've visited a fair number of the larger court facilities, and the co-operation that exists between all of the individuals involved in our criminal justice system is making a difference. The number of appearances, generally speaking, is down, and we want it to go down even further.

POVERTY REDUCTION

Mr. Reza Moridi: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Minister, poverty remains a serious problem in Ontario. I know that we can't break the cycle of poverty unless we utilize the dedication, resourcefulness and talent of Ontario women.

I know that this government is committed to providing services and support for women to help lift them out of poverty, like the Women in Skilled Trades program and the information technology training for women.

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While these initiatives support women in finding employment at established companies, they don't directly support entrepreneurship. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what else could the government do to help low-income women achieve economic security?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for Richmond Hill for this question. As members of this House will know, the Ontario Women's Directorate has the responsibility to develop programs to increase women's economic independence, because we know that if women are economically independent, they can build a better future for themselves and their children.

Recently, I was very pleased that the Ontario Women's Directorate issued an invitation for the very first time for proposals for a new microlending program. Last fall, I was very pleased to meet with microlending experts from around the province to seek their advice about what role the Ontario Women's Directorate might be able to play to ensure that women had more access to capital, more access to support, to start their own businesses.

The Ontario Women's Directorate is now inviting applications from microlending projects to increase or improve the knowledge base of microlending, to address service gaps, and to establish new microlending programs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Minister. My supplementary question is also for the minister responsible for women's issues.

As we all know, these have been challenging economic times. We have seen the worst recession in a generation. While Ontario has weathered this recession better than most jurisdictions in Canada and around the world, we know that women are often most adversely impacted during economic downturns.

How will programs like this microlending initiative work in conjunction with other elements of our government's poverty reduction strategy?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Although it does not have the lead responsibility for the poverty reduction strategy—that rests with the Minister of Children and Youth Services—the Ontario Women's Directorate plays a key role in seeking to establish a better future for women and their children.

We have increased a number of investments in local training programs—full-day kindergarten, obviously, is of assistance—minimum wage increases and clear support for child care. The Ontario Women's Directorate has led the way when it comes to economic security for Ontario women.

Since 2003, we've trained more than 1,500 low-income women to secure high-paying jobs in the skilled trades and IT sectors. We've also trained more than 1,600 abused or at-risk women, allowing them to develop skills.

Again, the role that the Ontario Women's Directorate plays to increase the economic independence of women is critical to their life success.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, on May 29, I asked for your assistance for my constituent Liam Reid to obtain out-of-country treatment for a rare eye disease known as PFVS/Norrie's. You refused him assistance on the basis that "when there are doctors here in Ontario who can perform services, that work must be done" and "we must have care provided in Ontario when that care is available in Ontario."

Minister, Liam, his mother, Kristina, and his father, David, are here in the gallery today, and they want you to know that they've searched around Ontario and have been unable to locate a pediatric retinal specialist with sufficient expertise to treat Liam. In fact, the surgeon at the Hospital for Sick Children who unsuccessfully operated on Liam's right eye supports his application for this treatment by Dr. Trese and said, "We certainly do not have the same amount of expertise as Dr. Trese. His innovative management in pediatric retinal disease is unmatched in his field."

Based on this information, Minister, will you please provide the treatment by Dr. Trese that Liam needs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for raising this issue once again. I have to say, I have been watching Liam all through question period. He is truly a charming little boy.

I cannot intervene in specific cases, but what I can do is assure the member opposite and assure the family that the out-of-country program is there for people when expertise is not available here in Ontario. The out-of-country program is a pressure valve. There is a process that one must go through to get approved for out-of-country coverage. There is an appeal process and an appeal, actually, of that appeal is also available. So there is a process that a family can go through to get out-of-country coverage if they feel that the expertise is not available here. But we must support the Ontario doctors when in fact there is expertise here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Minister, Liam needs your help. You cannot continue to hide behind excuses. There are no specialists in Ontario who are able to treat this child. The appeals process—you know or you should know—has been completely exhausted. It's finished. Only you can help in this situation. We're advised that another Ontario child with exactly the same condition is receiving treatment by exactly the same doctor. Why won't you get involved in this case and do what's fair to ensure that Liam has the opportunity for sight? It's the right thing to do.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would be more than happy to meet with the family after question period and ensure that all of the steps in fact have been taken. There is, as I have said, an application process for out-of-country coverage that can be appealed by the Health Services Appeal and Review Board. If a family is not happy with that result, they can request an internal review, if in fact there is more information to be offered. Speaker, the HSARB is an independent body. It is made up of people who have the expertise to make a determination about whether or not out-of-country is appropriate, and the family can in fact refer this to the courts if they so choose.

DRIVE CLEAN

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Changes to Ontario's Drive Clean program require local, independent garage owners like Gino Sciscente, of Lakeshore Garage, and Sam Vukadinovic, of Auto Experts, who are here in the gallery today, to spend \$20,000 each in new equipment. They also have to pay extra fees for reaccreditation and monthly maintenance. This unfairly targets independent garage owners across Ontario at a time when the economy has not recovered. Does the minister plan to drive independent garage owners completely out of business?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Drive Clean continues to be play an important role in protecting the air that we happen to breathe in the province. Beginning in 2012, Drive Clean is phasing in a new, more accurate testing technology that is expected to reduce emissions from on-road vehicles by 20% over what can be achieved with the current test. There will be no additional cost to the consumer. The testing fee will remain the same. Also, all vehicles, cars, trucks and buses less than seven years old no longer need to be tested when the registration is renewed. Passenger cars, vans and SUVs no longer need to be tested for the following: transfer between family members, coming off lease and being purchased by the person who is leasing the vehicle or renewing registration—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: With all due respect, that's not comforting to Sam or Gino at all. The government, without any consultation, brings in new regulations, forces garage owners to invest in new equipment even if the old equipment is still working well, and forces them to buy from only one supplier, Parsons. The ministry has also been late in getting information to businesses at every step of this so-called modernization program, leaving them with little time to come up with a financial plan and with no financing for the program.

Small businesses account for 90% of new jobs in this province. Why is the minister driving small business out of business instead of helping them?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, I can say that the proposed changes, as she will know, were posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights—environmental registry—in February 2010.

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: And to answer the interjection from my friend from Stoney Creek, to promote stakeholder awareness and invite input, Drive Clean stakeholders, including all Drive Clean facility owners, were sent notifications about the posting. The ministry received a total of 128 comments. Most were submitted by Drive Clean facilities. All comments received during the comment period, whether by email, regular mail or environmental registry, were considered by the Ministry

of the Environment as part of the decision-making process.

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PROTECTION OF GREAT LAKES

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My question is also for the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday the minister introduced important legislation that, if passed, will ensure that Ontarians can enjoy healthy, vibrant Great Lakes that are drinkable, swimmable and fishable, now and in the future.

Speaker, as an MPP with a riding with Lake Ontario as one border and another body of water called Highland Creek, I know first-hand how important this issue is. My constituents in Pickering-Scarborough East want us to conserve our water supply and protect our water quality in order to ensure the health of our families, our communities and our economy.

I'm wondering if the minister could provide some details to the House about our government's proposed Great Lakes Protection Act.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The Great Lakes, I think we would all understand, are vitally important to all Ontarians for our drinking water, quality of life and our prosperity.

Despite the fact there have been some significant successes, new challenges are overwhelming those old solutions, and that's why we need new initiatives to help the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes Protection Act would provide new tools to restore and protect priority areas.

The act would create a Great Lakes guardians' council to bring together government and interested parties to identify priorities and focus actions to address them. The province will also be offering grants to help small local groups undertake improvement projects in their corner of the Great Lakes.

Protecting and restoring the Great Lakes will enhance the quality of life in Ontario and is part of our government's plan to help spur the growth of innovative technologies and economic opportunities for Ontario's water sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to thank the minister for providing the House with the details of this very important act.

Ontario relies on the Great Lakes for our strength and success, and I'm pleased to see our government take continued action to protect the lakes and restore environmental health in our province.

I understand that, in combination with this bill, the ministry will also be producing a Great Lakes strategy for public review and comment. Speaker, through you, I'm wondering if the minister could explain to the House this strategy that ties in with the Great Lakes Protection Act.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Again, the member asks an excellent question. The Great Lakes strategy describes our current understanding of the challenges to the Great Lakes' environmental health, and it's going to be updated

periodically. The strategy will help us draw a road map, so to speak, of actions that should be taken using the new tools prescribed in the Great Lakes Protection Act.

Released yesterday for public comment on the Environmental Bill of Rights website, the strategy is built around goals which are consistent with the purpose of the act, such as: to create opportunities for individuals and communities to become involved in protecting the Great Lakes, to protect human health and well-being by protecting and restoring the health of the lakes and also to provide the kind of new initiatives that are going to be available to not only individuals but various sectors of government, which will enhance and improve the quality of life in our province.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Minister, last night after the news cycle ended, you quietly released some alarming news. This speaks once again to your government's complete incompetence and contempt for Ontario's privacy.

Several weeks ago, the Liberals allowed personal data of Ontario's anglers and hunters to be stored in a US database. Last night Ontarians were told of security violations of numerous ServiceOntario kiosks. The cycle of Liberal incompetence never ends.

Minister, when did you know about this violation, and why did you fail to inform Ontarians until most people were in bed? What was the nature of the security violation? Was it a breach of personal or financial information—or, just both?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I'm sure the member heard the answer that I gave before, and if she is aware of this information, I'm sure she heard it because I announced it. Otherwise, she would not know about it.

I want to make it very clear again: There is no indication that any personal details held by the Ontario government have been compromised. Our information is that the attempts were made to gain access to key credit and debit card data that allows replication of debit and credit cards. I heard it at 2:30 and the kiosks were down at 3 o'clock.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Minister, when you spoke about it before, you didn't give us any details or any information on when breaches occurred. Speaker, the minister's own press release said, "There have been security violations at a few ServiceOntario kiosks. Police have been advised and investigations are under way."

A few? That's reassuring to Ontarians. If the minister was really concerned about protecting Ontarians' private financial data, he would have acted decisively, as opposed to sneaking out a press release at 10:45 last night. We have come to expect this behaviour from you, but that doesn't make it right. When did these breaches occur? How many kiosks? What kiosks? Where were they? How many accounts were compromised? When did

the minister learn of the breach? Does the minister have any answers to any of these questions?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: This is really interesting. I think I answered all the questions. There were four kiosks, to the best of our information, that were compromised, and the police have been informed.

I also want to say, with regard to the story of the data in the US, that I think that question was answered yesterday, but also the privacy commissioner made it very, very clear. So I think maybe, once in a while, you should start listening to the answers that are given in the House as well. It will help.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Yesterday, London Health Sciences announced that they are making cuts totalling \$30 million next year. That's going to mean further cuts to patient care and outsourcing of back-office jobs that used to be done by London workers, while CEOs continue to earn sky-high executive salaries. Can the minister explain to the people of London why her government is making cutbacks that are forcing local hospitals to cut services?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks to the member for the question. This is one hospital that I've been looking at closely. What I can tell you is that our budget was very clear. Our action plan on health care is very clear. Our highest priority, when it comes to health care, is getting people out of hospitals. If they don't need to be in a hospital, if they could be cared for at home, we will provide the care at home. This is the right thing to do for the health care system. It's why we have frozen the base funding for hospitals at 0% and it's why we're freezing the compensation for physicians at \$11 billion: so we can invest more in the community. This is part of the transformation of Ontario's health care system that is vitally important if we want to have universal health care in the years ahead.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. Therefore, this House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1158 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Actually, a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Can we call for a quorum?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Cambridge is, on a point of order, calling for a quorum. Is there a quorum?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is now present.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. A quorum is present.

Introduction of guests.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce one of my constituents who drove all the way down from Nickel Belt this morning. Her name is M.J. Lamoureux, and she's here to testify on behalf of horse racing at the hearing this afternoon.

Mr. Mike Colle: With us today we have members of the sickle cell awareness committee from across Ontario. I've got Mr. Andy Anyaele and Ms. Comfort Anyaele, the parents of a child with sickle cell disease. I've got the renowned doctor from Sick Kids hospital, who is also heading the United Nations task force on sickle cell disease. Dr. Isaac Odamé is here.

I'd also like to welcome Mr. Bodun Macaulay, who is the chair of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada and also very involved with Camp Jumoke; and also Ms. Lanre Tunji-Ajayi, interim president of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada and the founder of the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario. I'd like to thank them for being here with us today.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my distinct pleasure and honour to welcome students of Team 4001 of St. Robert Catholic High School, sitting in the gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I understand that half of them are robots.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That's an inside joke.

The member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park a school in my riding, St. Elizabeth Catholic School, who are visiting here with their parents and teachers. Hopefully, they have a good stay at Queen's Park and enjoy the beauty of this place and certainly the democratic process.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

I LOVE ME CLUB

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members' statements? The member for B—

Mr. Rod Jackson: Barrie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I got the B right. I was trying to search for it. Sorry. The member from Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's okay. That's two times in a row, though. Thank you, Speaker.

Today I'd like to stand to talk about the I Love Me Club. Contrary to popular belief, this isn't my club, although it sounds like a club that many politicians would probably start.

Today I'd like to congratulate a young lady in my riding on her outstanding contributions to her community. Mackenzie Oliver founded the I Love Me Club when she was in grade 3. She was trying to help one of her friends who had trouble with her own self-esteem. Inspired by her mother, Mackenzie formed the I Love Me Club to reach out to youth around the world. The club initially consisted of Mackenzie and several close friends, and has bloomed into a group of more than 600 members across communities in Ontario.

The I Love Me Club focuses on empowering youth through peer and emotional support. Moreover, the club raises money for local charities by selling T-shirts, blankets and jewellery. The club has donated over \$20,000 for Gilda's Club of Simcoe Muskoka. Also, Mackenzie and her friends have organized six haircut charity drives to help cancer patients.

On March 8, Mackenzie was presented with the Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year Award from the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable David Onley, for empowering her peers and for her outstanding contribution to Ontario communities.

This year, Mackenzie is raising money to travel to Kenya to live, work and learn among the youth there and help them build schools.

Good job, Mackenzie. I'm proud of you, and Barrie's proud of you too.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Tomorrow, June 8, it will be one year since Mr. Jordan Fram and Mr. Jason Chenier were killed at work at Stobie mine in my riding. Speaker, it has been 30 years since the 1981 commission of inquiry on mining, and a lot of things have changed since then. In addition to the abundance of new technologies, ownership of mining has become international; environmental issues and knowledge have changed dramatically.

There have been 182 documented fatalities in Ontario's mines, eight last year alone, three in my riding: Jordan Fram, Jason Chenier and Stephen Perry. The deaths of our brothers and sisters in Ontario mines should not only be a cause for sadness, but a catalyst for change. We can learn from the lessons that took so much from us.

After 30 years and 182 coroners' reports, it is time to take a step back to look at the recommendations of the coroners as a body of evidence, to identify trends, and to motivate change. So, Speaker, I request today, on behalf of the 10,000 people who have signed postcards, that the Minister of Labour commission an inquiry into the state of mining in Ontario and into the ministry enforcement of the Ontario health and safety act and regulation in mining.

The time has come, Mr. Speaker. The time is now.

ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise here today to welcome the students of St. Robert Catholic High School and to share

with all of you their outstanding accomplishments in this year's robotics competition, where the team was acknowledged for their outstanding achievements.

Team number 4001 was made up of 30 students and teachers who built a robot that was small in size, performed defensive skills, and was able to balance itself on a bridge. Due to their robot's impressive small size and ability to perform all of the required tasks of the competition, the team was awarded the rookie all-star award and was sent to compete at the world championship, competing with 20,000 other students.

Team 4001 worked endlessly for months, focusing on pitching their product, developing a website, programming the robot, and creating and distributing promotional material. Team 4001 managed to place themselves 67th out of 400 teams in the world competition in St. Louis, Missouri, at the end of April.

These students from grades 9 to 12 have given us hope and have shown us how innovative and creative our youth are today. On behalf of all Ontarians, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all of the support staff and teachers at St. Robert Catholic High School for making us so proud.

CRISTY NURSE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased to rise today to give recognition to an alumna of the Ontario 4-H program, Cristy Nurse, an elite athlete who is vying for a position on Canada's Olympic women's eight rowing team to compete at the London Olympics later this summer.

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Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you for that.

I was at home on the weekend, reading my Leadership in Action 4-H Ontario Magazine, where there was a feature article on Cristy. I was just so proud of her. Cristy credits her 4-H experience for teaching her the skills and lessons that she has carried with her, including self-motivation, sportsmanship and the drive to succeed.

Cristy was an avid 4-H member in Halton. I remember Cristy as a little girl in pigtails, showing 4-H dairy calves almost bigger than she was. She has completed 45 4-H livestock and life skills clubs and has won many awards for her contributions to 4-H, including the President's Cup dairy showmanship competition at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

Cristy actually started her athletic career as a basketball player at the University of Guelph. While at law school in Ottawa, she decided to take up rowing. After competing in her first regatta, a former New Zealand national coach encouraged her to take up the sport full-time. In 2010, she made the Canadian women's eight rowing team and won silver at the World Championships in New Zealand. Last August, she made the team again and they won silver at the World Championships in Slovenia.

As a member of the Olympic selection camp, Cristy will find out this month if she's made the Olympic team. If Cristy is selected, I know that 4-H alumni and members across the province will be cheering her on. And as a proud 4-H alumnus myself, I want to wish her all the best.

EVENTS IN ALGOMA-MANITOULIN

Mr. Michael Mantha: I would like to take this opportunity, as we are nearing the end of session, to invite all of you and all Ontarians to my beautiful riding of Algoma-Manitoulin. The summer months up north are some of the most exciting times.

Coming up this week, we have Taste of Manitoulin, which is a celebration of our local foods, heritage and our culture. So drive on up, or hop on the Chi-Cheemaun.

Manitoulin Island is a magical place. Some of the most culturally rich events in the riding are the many powwows, such as Aundeck Omni Kaning, Shesheganing, Sheguiandah, Sagamok, Zhiibaahaasing, Wikwemikong, Whitefish River, M'Chigeeng, Michipicoten, Serpent River, Garden River, Thessalon, Batchawana Bay and Rankin.

If you like fish, be sure to come to our community fish fries and our derbies: the Dubreuilville Father's Day Walleye Fishing Derby, the derby in Sagamok and the Wawa Salmon Fishing Derby.

If you're looking for community events, we have the Massey Fair, the Blind River days, the White River Winnie the Pooh days, the Thessalon and Iron Bridge Heritage community days, and Haweater weekend in Little Current. Goulais River, Chapleau, Manitouwadge and Hornepayne all have a little something for you.

If car shows and drag races are your preference, then the Bruce Mines car show and the Elliot Lake and Wawa drag races are fantastic events.

Come to St. Joe's Island, where we will be commemorating the War of 1812 at the fort. In addition, there are community parades and festivals in Hilton Beach and Richards Landing. And their maple syrup, Mr. Speaker—mon Dieu.

Come one, come all. Algoma-Manitoulin is yours to discover.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not sure if he said something in the other official language that I should call unparliamentary, but that's fine.

SICKLE CELL DISEASE

Mr. Mike Colle: The United Nations has chosen June 19 as Sickle Cell Awareness Day in the world. On Saturday, in my own riding of Eglinton-Lawrence, we're going to have the Sickle Cell Walkathon. Thousands of people are going to be there to raise awareness about sickle cell.

As Dr. Isaac Odame, who's here from Sick Kids and from the United Nations task force on sickle cell, has said, "Sickle cell disease and thalassemia are inherited

lifelong disorders requiring a coordinated provision of a broad range of services, including early diagnosis at birth, education, genetic counselling, management of acute crises, prevention of infections and organ damage, chronic blood transfusion and long-term health maintenance."

As you can see, there's a lot of work to be done with sickle cell disease. In fact, there is a dearth of attention paid to this disease. It's a silent killer. It's too silent in Canada; it's too silent in Ontario. Too many young people suffer needlessly day after day because there isn't enough attention paid to this hidden, silent disease.

I ask all of you to see what you can do in your community to be more supportive of more research, more attention, more resources to fight and combat this disease, which affects so many fellow Ontarians. Please join us on June 9 for the walk. June 19 is World Sickle Cell Awareness Day.

TRIOS COLLEGE

Mr. Rob Leone: It's an honour today to recognize triOS College on its 20th anniversary.

triOS College has evolved over the past two decades to become the largest independent Canadian-owned and -operated career college in Ontario. With annual enrolment exceeding 2,500 across more than 30 programs in nine campuses, triOS College serves a diverse audience of students. Students tend to be more mature than those served by community colleges. They are typically looking for skills retraining—for example, back-to-work moms, new Canadians and injured or unemployed workers.

Since their inception, triOS College has graduated over 20,000 students into rewarding careers across Canada. triOS College has been named one of Canada's 50 best-managed companies two years in a row, was awarded the Mississauga Board of Trade Business Award of Excellence, and was given the 2012 Brampton outstanding achievement award for community contribution.

I congratulate and commend triOS College on its achievements and contributions to the region of Waterloo and the province of Ontario.

FRENCHMAN'S BAY YACHT CLUB

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: As the MPP for Pickering-Scarborough East, I was very pleased and honoured to attend the Frenchman's Bay Yacht Club's 50th anniversary this past Saturday. It was a great day to celebrate and honour current and past executives of the Frenchman's Bay Yacht Club. Many members of the community were there too. It was wonderful.

The rain held off and we were able to sit outside right next to the beautiful Frenchman's Bay Harbour and to hear the 50 years of history of this wonderful yacht club.

The day went on. We enjoyed a very nice lunch. Of course, the highlight of the day was the sail-past in the afternoon.

I want to specifically thank Ed Fulton—I understand a former member and cabinet member of the Ontario Legislature—and also thank the fantastic group of volunteers for their hard work and dedication to make the 50th anniversary a great event.

They had developed a book as well, with pictures of the Frenchman's Bay Harbour and the community: a real tribute to a wonderful part of my community in Pickering–Scarborough East.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very proud today to get up and share with members of the Legislature a document that was released recently—in fact, just in late May. There was a special supplement of the *Globe and Mail* on that day which outlined and featured a book entitled *Canada: Winning as a Sustainable Energy Superpower*.

I'm very proud of this because the principal contributor to this particular book—this isn't the book; this is just the executive summary—is actually the provost and VP of academic studies at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. He has taken it upon himself, working with his peers in the industry, to develop solutions in the future with renewable energy and sustainable energy.

I'd like to give some recognition to his partners in the project. Certainly, I would have to mention Clement Bowman. Also, the sponsors of the project were Alberta Innovates: Energy and Environmental Solutions, and the Bowman Centre for Technology Commercialization.

The actual theme here is the working together of academics and business to look to the future, and the future of energy itself. I would encourage people—they can get a copy of the text online, and through my office certainly. I'm looking for the email address where you could probably get it. Here it is here: clembowman.info/EnergyPathways.html. Get a copy of this very important, very forward-looking academic paper.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT (FOOD BANK DONATION TAX CREDIT FOR FARMERS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS (CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT AUX AGRICULTEURS POUR DONS À UNE BANQUE ALIMENTAIRE)

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide a tax credit to farmers for donating to Ontario food banks certain agricultural products they produced / *Projet de loi 104, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les*

agriculteurs qui font don de certains produits agricoles qu'ils produisent à des banques alimentaires de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The enactment of section 103.1 of the Taxation Act, 2007, provides a non-refundable tax credit to those eligible Ontario farmers who donate certain agricultural products they produce to Ontario food banks. The tax credit is 25% of the wholesale value of the donated agricultural products, and those unused tax credits may be carried forward and deducted in any of the following five years. If the tax credit is claimed in any year, no charitable tax credit may be claimed.

SICKLE CELL AND THALASSEMIA CARE ONTARIO ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR TRAITEMENT DES AFFECTIONS DRÉPANOCYTAIRES ET DES THALASSÉMIES ONTARIO

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to establish Sickle Cell and Thalassemia Care Ontario and to proclaim Sickle Cell and Thalassemia Awareness Day / *Projet de loi 105, Loi créant Traitement des affections drépanocytaires et des thalassémies Ontario et proclamant la Journée de sensibilisation aux affections drépanocytaires et aux thalassémies.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Mike Colle: This bill, if passed, would set up a comprehensive program of care and supportive services for individuals in Ontario who suffer from sickle cell disease and thalassemia. It would also do what the United Nations has just done, and that is to proclaim June 19 as Sickle Cell Awareness Day in the province of Ontario.

PREVENTION OF ELECTORAL FRAUD ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DE LA FRAUDE ÉLECTORALE

Mr. Balkissoon moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to amend the Election Act to prevent electoral fraud by requiring electors to provide certain kinds of proof, by providing for independent reviews of the permanent register of electors and by making other amendments / *Projet de loi 106, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale dans le but de prévenir la fraude électorale en obligeant les électeurs à présenter certains types de preuves, en prévoyant des examens indépendants du*

registre permanent des électeurs et en apportant d'autres modifications.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: The bill amends the Election Act to deal with the proof that an elector must provide in a number of circumstances, including when applying to have his or her name added to the permanent register of electors. Rules are added related to what constitutes proof, and a requirement for proof of citizenship is added. It also requires the Chief Electoral Officer to appoint an independent party to conduct a review of the permanent register of electors every five years. It also provides added opportunities for scrutineers at the polling stations, and it requires the returning officers and revision assistants to complete a certificate of addition when an elector's name is added to the polling list on polling day.

MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I should say that this was agreed to at the House leaders' meeting, so people don't consider it a surprise.

I seek unanimous consent that government order number 5 be now called and that the Speaker immediately put the question without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister has sought government order number 5 to be called. Is it the consent of the House? Agreed? Agreed.

I am now required to put the question. On June 6, Mr. Miller of Parry Sound-Muskoka moved adoption of the report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts concerning its request for the issuance of a Speaker's warrant for the appearance of Dr. Chris Mazza before the committee on July 18, 2012.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Report adopted.

PETITIONS

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm always pleased to present petitions on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. These particular ones arrived in my office late, but out of respect—because the issue has been passed. The petitions were presented to me by Teresa Pierre, a Ph.D. person representing the group Parents as First

Educators. The petition is with respect to Bill 13, and reads as follows:

"Whereas, as an anti-bullying measure, Bill 13 is unnecessary because Ontarians already have Bill 157; and
"Whereas Bill 13 promotes an equity policy entailing radical revisions to school instruction on sex and gender that a majority of parents do not support; and

"Whereas legislation is not the way to implement equity education (this should rather be addressed by teacher training, after wider parental consultation, in a way which respects the views of people of faith);

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to vote against Bill 13."

I'm pleased to sign this and present it to page Dana.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Alexander.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Rod Jackson: I have a petition here from some doctors in Barrie to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal Party under Dalton McGuinty has undertaken unilateral cuts of \$360 million without negotiations to the delivery of patients' health care this year and the Ministry of Health under Deb Matthews proposes a further cut of \$1.1 billion over the next three years that will cause a devastating and irreversible reduction in the quality and amount of health care to the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"All existing imposed cuts to the provision of health care should be put on hold until the Ontario government enters into real negotiations with the Ontario Medical Association and that the people of Ontario need to be

involved in the decision-making process if major changes are to occur in the services provided as a result of deficit cuts so that their voices are heard.”

I agree with this, and I affix my name and send it to the table with Anthonie.

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ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from young people in the Waterloo and Wellington area.

“Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

“Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

“Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

“Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school.”

Speaker, I support this bill, will affix my signature and send it up with page Sam.

ONTARIO HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows. This is from the doctors in my riding. There's quite a few of them, and it reads:

“Whereas the McGuinty government has announced plans to change a number of Ontario health insurance plan (OHIP) services; and

“Whereas these changes are the result of a provincial debt crisis created by nine years of out-of-control government spending;”—and waste—“and

“Whereas these changes will affect the ophthalmology, cardiology, and radiology services that are currently crucial to many Ontarians' quality of life;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:” Deb Matthews should resign. No, it doesn't say that.

“That the McGuinty government release its patient health impact study on the recently announced Ontario health insurance plan changes or, if such a study has not been conducted, that one is immediately undertaken and made public.”

I'm pleased to sign it in support of my doctors, citizens of Ontario, and present it to Rumesa.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to present the following petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of northwestern Ontario, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the province's economy from other provinces and the United States, unlike other regions in the province whose target demographic is people who already reside in Ontario;

“Whereas northwestern Ontario's tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales tax ... the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

“Whereas studies have shown that tourism in the northwest nets significantly more money per stay than other regions of the province, in part due to visitors frequenting historical sites, parks and other roadside attractions that they learn about through travel information centres;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To keep the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River open permanently to ensure that northwestern Ontario maximizes the benefit of our tourist economy.”

I am proud to support this and will give this to page Alexander to deliver to the table.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased today—I received a petition from Crystal May, who lives at 97 North Drive in wonderful Kitchener, Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

“Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

“Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

“Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school.”

Mr. Speaker, I will affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Tameem.

UTILITY CHARGES

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of folks from Cambridge, and I also notice on this list that there are some folks actually from the Ottawa area, Laperriere Avenue in Ottawa. I don't know if that's in the Premier's riding or not. But that being said, this petition is to the Premier and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas section 398(2) of the Municipal Act, 2001 (the 'act'), allows a municipality to add public utility arrears incurred by a tenant to the municipal tax bill of the owner; and

"Whereas Ontario regulation 581/06 permits such arrears to have priority lien status under the act; and

"Whereas these provisions reversed the long-standing law in this area that held that a landlord was not responsible for utility charges where the landlord was not the consumer; and

"Whereas landlords may now be burdened unfairly, and potentially catastrophically, with fees and charges they have no control over; and

"Whereas these provisions will also impact tenants who are not in arrears with their utility payments but who will now face rent increases and/or increases in utility payments where such payments are pooled as landlords attempt to recoup these outstanding liabilities; and

"Whereas a number of municipalities, including Penetanguishene, Bracebridge and Niagara Falls, have reversed such policies as a result of the demonstrated and unprecedented negative impacts on landlords and tenants; and

"Whereas municipalities and utility providers in Ontario already have at their disposal a number of means by which they can control or collect outstanding arrears, including by requiring deposits for the utility service pursuant to the Public Utilities Act and by seizing personal property in the possession of the ratepayer;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Repeal section 398(2) of the Municipal Act, 2001, and amend Ontario regulation 581/06 accordingly, to ensure that property owners are not responsible for the payment of outstanding utility arrears where they are not the consumer."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition and will sign it and will hand it to page Dana.

CYCLING

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 28% of Ontario adults regularly cycle and over 50% of children cycle either daily or weekly;

"Whereas a cycling fatality occurs every month in Ontario and thousands of cyclists are injured each month;

"Whereas Ontario is lagging behind provinces like British Columbia and Quebec that have invested \$31 mil-

lion and \$200 million respectively in cycling infrastructure;

"Whereas investing in cycling infrastructure in Ontario will create jobs and benefit the economy, reduce traffic congestion and pollution, protect those sharing the road, encourage active transportation, and improve public health;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario release a comprehensive bicycling strategy for Ontario that facilitates the development of policy and legislation relating to bicycling in Ontario. This policy would include dedicated funding to match municipal investments in cycling infrastructure, education initiatives to raise awareness about the rights and responsibilities of all road users, and a review and update of provincial legislation, including the Highway Traffic Act and Planning Act, to ensure roadways are safe for all users;

"That the strategy set provincial targets and timelines for increasing the number of people who commute by bike and cycle recreationally."

Speaker, I support this petition. I'll affix my name to it once I can find a pen, and I'll give it to page Tameem to bring to you.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I too have a petition to support Bill 13 to help end bullying in Ontario. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all ... students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

Speaker, I support this petition, will affix my signature to it and send it to the clerks' desk with page Sherry.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. John O'Toole: I have to read my petition on Bill 13 here. Again, it's from Teresa Pierre, Ph.D., representing Parents as First Educators. Many, many people I recognize on here need to be commended as well for

recognizing the role of parents in educating their children. This reads as follows:

"Whereas, as an anti-bullying measure, Bill 13"—which they're talking about here today—"is unnecessary because Ontarians already have Bill 157; and

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"Whereas Bill 13 promotes radical revisions to school instruction on sex and gender that a majority of parents do not support; and

"Whereas legislation is not the way to implement equity education (this should rather be addressed by teacher training, after wider parental consultation, in a way which respects the views of people of faith);

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to vote against Bill 13."

I've presented thousands of them, and Mateo, who is a young student here, will take it to the table after I sign it.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I do have a petition today. In fact, it's from Speaker Levac's riding, from Ashley Ricci of 29 Jackson Lane, from wonderful Brantford, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

I will affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Dana.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions has expired. Oh, sorry, one more. The member for Durham.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm representing my constituents as thoroughly and as frequently as possible. This one here is a different one.

"Whereas, under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

"Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in homes operating bed and breakfasts in rural Ontario;

"Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

"Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water through years of regular testing;

"Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs to comply with" Premier McGuinty's high taxation regime and other regulations like 319/08;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process;

"Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water supply meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08."

I'm pleased to sign this and present it to Angela, one of the pages here at Queen's Park.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ADDRESSING ONTARIO'S DEBT THROUGH ALTERNATIVES TO PUBLIC SECTOR LAYOFFS AND PROGRAM CUTS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT À S'ATTAQUER À LA DETTE DE L'ONTARIO SANS RECOURIR À DES MISES À PIED DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC ET À DES COMPRESSIONS DANS LES PROGRAMMES

Mr. Barrett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 94, An Act to address Ontario's debt through alternatives to public sector layoffs and government program cuts while reducing the fiscal pressure on the people of Ontario who are having trouble paying their bills / Projet de loi 94, Loi visant à s'attaquer à la dette de l'Ontario sans recourir à des mises à pied dans le secteur public et à des compressions dans les programmes gouvernementaux tout en allégeant le fardeau financier des Ontariennes et Ontariens qui peinent à payer leurs factures.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'll begin by making my case for Bill 94—it bears repeating—the Addressing Ontario's

Debt Through Alternatives to Public Sector Layoffs and Program Cuts Act.

I'll begin with a quote: "We can't manage the deficit without addressing what is the single biggest line in our budget—public sector compensation." Who said that, Speaker? None other than Finance Minister Dwight Duncan.

And this from Don Drummond: "One recommendation that crosses all sectors is the need for prolonged moderation of growth in public sector total compensation."

Speaker, the total amount paid to public sector workers now accounts for 55 cents—actually, over 55 cents of every dollar spent by the Ontario government. We all in this House know that Ontario is facing a projected \$30.2-billion deficit and a \$411.4-billion debt by the year 2017-18. Again, over half that shortfall is the result of civil servant labour costs.

We also know that people are upset about the spectre of program cuts to valued government services, and people, particularly the over one million people who work for the public service, don't want to see mass layoffs. I propose Bill 94 as a step towards realizing and dealing with some of these conflicting goals, and I'm sincerely committed to talking to anyone who will listen about some viable options.

Bill 94 stresses the requirement for meaningful public sector consultation and negotiation among all parties, while moving forward on a number of proposals. Number one: limit public servants' compensation to the rate of economic growth; consider unpaid furlough and defined contribution pensions—Speaker, I will point out that both these measures are included in this proposed legislation, but they are not mandatory.

Limit collective agreements—

Interjection.

Mr. Jerry Barrett: I got a vote already.

Limit collective agreements to one year; take into account total compensation; and lastly, introduce the concept of a wage board to research private versus public comparables.

Speaker, financially strapped Ontarians are tired of paying higher taxes to cover the costs of what many see as an increasingly bloated and ineffective governance. I door-knock: People can't afford it, and neither can their kids.

I feel it's time for a transformation in how we do business through our Ontario government. We are at a crossroads, and the road of unconstrained spending is running headlong into the road of fiscal and economic reality, paving the way—and I will repeat this—toward the predicted \$411.4-billion debt. Speaker, I feel it's time to hit the brakes before we slam head-on into this massive wall of debt, and I do ask people: Turn around. Take a look. Take a look in the back seat. Your children, your grandchildren are riding in that vehicle with you.

Ontarians have always been conflicted, railing that their taxes are too high but demanding the broadest possible and highest quality services. This is what we

deal with in this Legislature. And politicians of all stripes have exploited this conflict by making sweeping promises to provide all things to all, and then, in many ways, manipulating the system to postpone the payment of that inevitable bill.

The bill is coming due, Speaker, but every generation has that incentive to borrow money from the future and spend on itself. As our natural aversion to debt has diminished over the years, politicians found they could buy votes with borrowed money as people became comfortable with the red ink. Now we're living in a fiscal bubble. People are beginning to understand that that bubble, as in many other jurisdictions, is about to burst.

This bill, to be more specific, proposes seven initiatives aimed at reining in compensation. The first step called for in Bill 94 clearly recognizes government's duty to consult with its public sector partners. Following a union challenge, the Supreme Court has ruled that government employees have the "right to unite, to present demands to ... employers collectively" and to work together to pursue workplace goals. Government employers, on the other side, have a corresponding duty to listen and discuss workplace concerns. This bill recognizes that duty, recognizes that right, and in my view, it's really all about mature, mutual respect and having a say in one's destiny.

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Bill 94's call to limit total compensation to Ontario's economic growth is the next point I want to make, specifically growth of the per capita provincial gross domestic product, or GDP. This is the lynchpin of this proposed legislation.

Politicians have for years approved generous contracts for their public employees, in many cases in exchange for support at the polls and campaign contributions from unions that represent those employees. You know, over the years, as I think my neighbours to the left could attest, it's been a mutually beneficial, symbiotic relationship, but as we see in the headlines, the chickens are now coming home to roost.

In the past, the common view was that voters don't want to face the consequences of their own spending demands and that they'll throw you out of office if you start making tough decisions. But people know about that debt. People of Ontario, in my view, really want us to finally stand up and make some tough decisions. They're getting tired of politicians who have talked about things like deficits but never fixed them, and it's important to do both, obviously. So in this age of tough choices, one bedrock principle has to be that we're all in this together, given the present economic and fiscal realities.

That's why Bill 94 suggests—and I stress that the proposed legislation does not make it mandatory—the concept of public sector furlough. Many of us remember the Rae days. However, what I recall most about those days, and in some years previous, was the very real sense among those of us who were on furlough that we were doing it voluntarily and we were helping to protect the jobs of others.

Also, Bill 94's suggestion—again, it's not mandatory—is to allow a change in public sector pensions to defined contribution from the present defined benefit in many cases. You know, we struggle with pension promises that should never have been made. Baby boomers ranging in age from 45 to 65 are approaching retirement, and those generous pension plans approved over the years are coming due. Given that MPPs are included in this legislation, I feel it's fair, it's equitable, to bring pensions in line with the defined contribution model that we as MPPs adopted 17 years ago. Again, defined benefit helps to control government's bottom line while giving public sector employees more control, more involvement, obviously, in their pension package. I know the member from York Simcoe has some thoughts on pensions we may hear this afternoon.

Here's another issue: Multi-year locked-in compensation increase agreements have prevented government from reacting in a timely fashion to address some of these urgent financial and economic concerns, thus again furthering our deficit and debt accumulation. Government needs that flexibility to react to changing economic realities. As budgets are crafted year by year, so too could government contracts with public sector employees be crafted year by year.

Bill 94 also proposes a long-needed call to consider the full compensation package, the package in its entirety. As Don Drummond has suggested, while we often concentrate on wages, we ignore the millions spent on benefits, on pensions—creep up the grid. Beyond the growth of base wages, other factors—overtime, shift premiums, merit pay—obviously have a significant cost.

People getting paid by taxpayers shouldn't get a better deal than the taxpayers themselves. Ontario public sector workers earn something like 27% more than their counterparts in the private sector. Following from that, this legislation will mandate stricter criteria for compensation awards and researching private versus public comparables. This would be achieved through a provincial wage board.

While temporary wage moderation will meet short-term fiscal targets—whether it be, for example, the wage freeze proposed by both the government and the official opposition—longer-term action is obviously required, obviously with a co-operative approach involving all sides, an approach that takes that long view, an approach that can truly drive institutional and system-level change. At the beginning of my remarks, I used the word “transformation.” If not, moderation in total compensation out of necessity will ultimately give way to excessive reduction in the size of the government workforce and excessive cuts—cuts to government programs. I might say “guts” to government programs—a Freudian slip on that one.

And I sincerely believe, Speaker, the people of Ontario understand this. They are calling for action. They're calling for a plan. It's time for all of us in this House to take a stand for the people we work for, because the voters and the taxpayers are ahead of the politicians on

this one. For that reason, I feel it's time to take a look at some of these ideas in Bill 94.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I will vote against Bill 94 when it comes to a vote; there's no doubt about that. I do agree with him that we have a deficit problem, and on that, we all, I think, find common ground. Yes, in 1990, in that recessionary period, we had a huge deficit. It was up to \$11 billion. The Conservatives and Liberals attacked us ferociously, some more vicious than others. The Conservatives attacked us pretty ferociously at that time, without recognizing that both the Mulroney government of the time, who started that, and then the Liberals in 1993—both of these parties at the federal level cut the level of support that we used to get to support welfare recipients. Our welfare bill went from \$1 billion to \$6 billion. There was not one Tory or even one fine Liberal at the time that said, “Isn't that shameful,” that in such a recessionary period, when we needed the federal government most, they cut back the transfer payments. Where we used to share the cost, at a time when we needed their help the most, they slashed that support, and not one member of the opposition said, “Ontario's hurting, and it's hurting because of that.”

So, yes, we had our fair share of deficits at the time, and we were making up for it. We were dealing with it as the economy improved. The economy improved so much that good old Mike Harris ended up with the benefits of a better economy. God bless. That's the way it goes. Had we maintained the corporate tax levels and the income tax levels of that time, the deficit would have been gone in one or two years after 1995. It would have been gone.

What the Tories refuse to accept is that we have a revenue problem. They keep saying, as the old Harris regime—and I remember Chris Stockwell being more or less right there, and every day he would stand up and say, “We've got a spending problem.” It was almost rhythmic. You could hear it. You could just wait for that wave: “We have a spending problem.” Who would remember? We've got a couple of Tories of the old days that would remember that. And they're still saying, 20 years later, “We've got a spending problem”—it doesn't go away. You market fundamentalists have it all wrong. You have it all wrong. And you, in a good economy, left us with a \$5-billion, \$6-billion deficit, and you still deny that you did that in a good economy. God bless; I don't know how you do that. You, good managers of the economy, left a \$5-billion, \$6-billion deficit. I know they're the enemy. I know they're in government. I understand. But some historical little facts wouldn't hurt you.

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So when you have a good economy, I would think the Tories, who are well known for being able to manage the economy—yet could leave us with such a deficit. How do you still have credibility with 30% to 35% of the Ontario public? I just don't get it. But that's the way it goes. That's the reality. We deal with that. We accept it.

But we have a revenue problem. That's why we pressed the Liberals to accept a surtax on those who earn over 500,000 bucks. And the Liberals finally relented; many quietly, cautiously, quietly in caucus, said, "We've got to support this, I know." Dalton McGuinty, the Premier, was balking, saying, "No, we can't." Then, finally, at the end of it, he said yes. God bless again. Reason prevailed. Reason prevailed, and now we've got a new tax on those who have the money to give a little. I'm not asking for a lot, just a 2% surtax. Some of them are quite happy to give, and many of them will be happy to dodge the tax. Why can they do that? Because the laws still allow them to manoeuvre from one place to the other so they can pay less. As a result of those great earnings they have, the loopholes allow them to be able to escape paying taxes, and they will find them, because there are laws here and in other provinces, Canadian laws, that will allow them to do that. Until we close those loopholes, some of them will get away with paying less and less each and every day, each and every year. Something is wrong with that.

When wealthy people refuse to pay their fair share, we've got a problem. When Tories keep thinking, provincially and federally, that they can depress wages, depress benefits, as this bill tries to do, freeze wages, as the member Elgin—Middlesex—London tried to do—these schemes do not work. When workers do not earn good wages and benefits, but particularly good wages, they will not spend. If they do not spend, market fundamentalism will see capitalism go down the tubes. And why it is that some of you just don't see it, I don't know. Like, for me, it's quite simple. But some of you have degrees in the field. So I get puzzled by what manner of degree some of you got in the field of finance. But if they do not spend, the economy crawls.

Capitalists, those who own companies, corporations, manufacturing, they will lay off workers. When they lay off workers, we've got a problem. It means more and more people will be unemployed and left at the mercy of a federal Conservative government that says, "You'll have fewer unemployment benefits." God bless the federals again—Conservatives. God bless. I'm telling you, bright people up there.

These schemes do not work. Here's my concern: The Liberals have a problem, too. Now, Dalton McGuinty, the Premier, says freezing wages is bad. But I've often heard him say, "Either negotiate or we'll legislate." That left me a bit puzzled. What does it mean? He says to Tories that legislation doesn't work. We say that. He says to you it doesn't work, but at the same time he says, "Negotiate or legislate." How does that work? When people—teachers—are not at the table, is that negotiation? Is there a reason why they're not at the table? Yes. It's because what's on the table, not the public table but the secret table, is talking about the grid, changing the grid that allows teachers to be able to get incremental increases every year for 10 or 11 years or whatever boards negotiate; they're talking about changing that grid, changing it radically, not even freezing it for one or

two years but probably and possibly changing it all together. That would be anathema to most teachers. Worse, they're talking about changing the pensions, i.e., à la Conservative form, possibly, moving away from defined pensions to a defined contribution plan, which is what the Tories are proposing.

Now, in the end, I am hoping that the Liberals, either the minister or the Premier, are going to come to their Liberal senses and realize they will be politically massacred. I am hoping they will come to their senses, but I don't know. So when they say "negotiate or legislate," I find that to be a confused Conservative position—meaning Conservatives in a hurry. So Liberals have to deal with this perplexing, paradoxical contradiction that they seem to face day in and day out, and it doesn't seem to go away.

I want to be able to say to the member—who I like, by the way—that his proposal that we move civil servants away from a defined plan to a defined contribution plan, à la MPPs in this Legislature, is not something that I suspect is going to find too much support from many people. You might have heard me say today to the member for St. Catharines that the reason why he's been here for 35 years is because he's got no pension, and he's got to continue working until he drops.

This kind of plan, a defined contribution plan, means, my fine Conservative friends, that you'll be working till you drop, because a defined contribution plan means, at the end of it, you don't have much of a wage. Only up to 35% of people have a defined contribution plan—private pension plan; the rest don't have it. Those who do not have a defined pension plan are seriously in trouble as pensioners. That's why you see more and more pensioners—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: That's not true.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Well, you, former mayor, can speak to it in a second. But that's why more and more seniors are working longer than ever. More and more seniors are going back to work because they realize that being pensioned off isn't enough to have a decent life. So they're going back to work. Why? Because their pension plans are not that good. Once you retire, you realize that costs in this country are not easy; it's not cheap. So a defined contribution plan—at the moment, I'll tell the member, I'll tell you publicly, member from Haldimand—Norfolk, I don't know what your numbers are, but I would be making \$18,000, if I retired today, with what I've got now—\$18,000 for life.

Now, you might think that's okay. After 22 or 23 years of work, you might think that's okay, and maybe some of your Conservative members think that's okay too. I don't know. I want to hear others speak to it, because I'm excited to learn their position on that one specifically. But I'm telling you, these schemes don't work. They're going to hurt our economy and they're going to hurt people in particular. I'm going to, with eagerness, vote against this bill when it comes to a vote in a couple of hours.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to rise and speak about this bill. I'm going to take this from the perspective that I think everyone else has: We have a deficit and we have a challenge, and we need to find ways and means and opportunities to address that. But I would like to think that we need to explore all of those opportunities, not just some of them. So I'd like to share some thoughts with you.

Part of it is to deal with the fact that, in a recovery, actually, GDP tends to rise more quickly, so that in fact there would be some costs associated with this particular bill in terms of attaching it to GDP.

But I'd like to share something else with you that may give you some food for thought. It's interesting to note that the CIBC chief economist, Jeff Rubin, has actually endorsed an entirely different approach to these types of issues. It's the German approach, and I'm going to use the name, if you'll excuse my German. I think it's called *Kurzarbeit*. What it in fact means is it's the government that uses wage subsidies to encourage firms to actually hoard their workers during recessions rather than shedding them. When Siemens, for example, faces a 30% drop in demand for its products, it's just as tempted as an American firm would be to lay off 30%. However, in Germany, the customary practice is actually to retain those employees while reducing their hours and their wages in this particular system. It makes this job-sharing system work and it helps out the affected employees, and the government actually pitches in with up to maybe as high as 60% of their lost salary. So despite a global recession and despite a European debt crisis, the German unemployment rate is lower than it was in January 2009.

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The result of this approach is to make sure that everyone who can work actually does work. This reduces unemployment and much of those social costs and the pathology of unemployment and poverty that we heard about before. Part of the challenge when someone is unemployed is it not only affects that individual but often their families. Then you get into that whole cycle of poverty, and as you heard, it raised the cost to \$6 billion, during the recession many years ago, on the social service side. But if you can keep someone working and reduce those costs, it makes far more sense. The result of this approach, as I said, is to make sure that those who can work, do work. It reduces the unemployment.

But it also relates to what can be done to keep those unemployment numbers down. This is an issue that is particularly interesting to me. One of our challenges is, yes, we have an unemployment rate of about 7.8% or 7.9% here in Canada, but our youth unemployment rate is 14% to 15%. Now we have a federal government that's actually looking at increasing the years, and as you heard the member from Trinity-Spadina say, people who are older wish to work longer, to ensure that they have the earnings to be able to retire. But what it does do is increase that youth unemployment.

If you look around the world—heaven forbid we should get to where Spain is. Spain has 46% youth un-

employment, and with that also comes anger, angst and anarchy. You're going to find that those young people who have a lot of time on their hands and nothing to do are really angry and will turn that around towards the government. It makes more sense to find a practice that actually works.

As I said, I'm particularly interested in what Jeff Rubin is suggesting, and I'm also interested in Edmund Phelps. I don't know if you know Edmund Phelps. He's a Nobel prize winner and a free-market economist, and probably as right-wing as they come. He was saying as well—he was sort of fed up with the fact that the market was not solving the poverty problem and that in fact it was increasing the ghettos of poverty and wasted human potential. He felt that the folks who had the opportunity to work weren't able to work. He actually endorses a whole new approach to how we deal with unemployment, rather than just the traditional approach.

What I would suggest is that, although my friend is well-intentioned in his approach, I find some of the things too punitive. I also find the GDP that's attached to it—as I said, in a recession, you go back historically and you'll find it increases in the recovery. Even the nominal that they come out with—it usually is above the nominal, so we would find ourselves paying out more than we had hoped to be able to save.

The other is that if you're actually going to find a solution to some of these issues, it's not going to be through a piece of punitive legislation. It's going to be by bringing the people together at the table to solve the problem, to turn around and say we can't afford the kinds of pensions that we've had, that everybody had contributed to, multiple governments etc., over the years. We must deal with a wage freeze. We have to deal with the deficit, or our problem will exacerbate itself. But you have to be part of the solution, not just part of the problem or the challenge, and what do you think you can do and what do you think you can contribute to help us solve that problem? I really believe that that is an honest approach to saying how do we actually get around an extraordinary deficit, before we find ourselves in a position where there will be no choices.

I'm also concerned—I think you heard the Prime Minister. Usually, what he says is pretty straightforward, and his words of caution warrant, or merit, a good deal of listening. What's going to happen in Europe, if it unravels, will ultimately ripple across the pond and impact us here. He has been clear, very clear—unequivocal. He has said, "We will not bail out a second time." That means, in fact, that there will be potential job losses. That really means that we here in this Legislature must put our collective heads together and find a way to build some consensus around how we are going to save this province from this extraordinary deficit that we have and be able to move forward.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share in this debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join in support of my colleague the member for Haldimand–Norfolk as we debate Bill 94.

This bill raises many important issues, issues which the McGuinty government continues to refuse to resolve. How can we continue to afford massive increases in government spending, huge increases in the size of the public service, with the number of public servants rising by almost a quarter of a million people under the Liberals, and how will we pay for it all?

We know that Ontario is heading for a \$30-billion deficit and \$400 billion of debt. This is the result of almost a decade of Liberal government overspending. In better financial times, the government could mask this overspending by a growing economy and higher taxes. But now the bills are coming due, and they have no plan to deal with them.

As our party's retirement security critic, I want to deal with the parts of the bill that look at public sector pensions.

One of the issues my colleague raises is the necessity to change from defined benefit pension plans to defined contribution plans. Let's just remember what this means. A defined benefit plan offers guaranteed benefits that are low risk for the employees. Contributions are made by employees and employers, but the employer is responsible for any shortfall. In a defined contribution plan, the employer commits to a specific contribution rate and employees absorb the financial risk and/or benefits of the plan. The private sector has now moved overwhelmingly to defined contribution plans because defined benefit plans are so unaffordable.

Why are they unaffordable? Well, there are three reasons. The first one is the demographics. People are living a lot longer than they used to, and the baby boomer cohort is starting to retire—so a combination of a greater number and a longer life expectancy. The third issue is multiple years of low interest rates on investments, which, then, also strains pension funds. This combination makes pensions unaffordable.

We will soon face an Ontario where public servants will actually collect pensions for a longer time than they worked for the government. And with defined benefit plans, taxpayers are on the hook for every penny. Unless we make changes to our system, it cannot remain sustainable, particularly with the government adding a quarter of a million new public servants.

We also hear constantly about the unfunded liability of public pension plans, billions and billions of dollars in a multitude of public pension plans, and the government won't tell us the total unfunded liability. In fact, the CFIB says that no one knows the total. What we do know is that Ontario's taxpayers are on the hook to pay for this, and if the government doesn't get control of this, future taxpayers will face massive increases to pay the pensions of public sector workers, increases they may not be willing to pay.

The government needs to get control of costs today. For almost a decade, they have used tax money to buy

labour peace in Ontario. We simply cannot afford this any longer. We need a system that provides, on the one hand, the public services people expect and that pays fair wages and pensions, but it has to be sustainable.

Hundreds of thousands of people in the private sector can look forward to little or no pension earnings beyond CPP and OAS. They should not have to pay more in tax to support expensive public sector pensions.

I think it's really important to see this from the standpoint of the unfairness to everyone. Obviously, the question of those recipients who look at the fact that there are a growing number of people sharing a smaller pot in terms of the pension plans themselves—those younger workers who are contributing to pension plans and looking at the future with some concern, and also the public, the general public, that is on the hook for public sector pensions.

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In this environment, in this landscape, if you like, I think it is an opportunity to have a public discussion about the way in which the government of whatever political stripe should move forward, so I'm pleased to support the bill from my colleague.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to respond to the debate on Bill 94.

I think it may be worthwhile to spend a few minutes looking at what the bill actually says. What it does is, it says that, "Starting on the day when a collective agreement or other agreement that sets the annual compensation of an employee employed in the public sector expires, the bill limits the increase in the employee's annual compensation to the annual rate of change in the real gross domestic product of Ontario," and then it goes on and says a lot of other things.

We all agree that we've got a deficit and we need to manage public sector wages, so I don't think that that's an issue; it's: How do we manage to do that in a way that is respecting both the employees and the taxpayers? But what's really interesting is, when you start actually reading the bill, it only applies to amending the crown employment—sorry; let me take another run at that—the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act.

If you think about where we pay most of the money, we pay most of the money that goes to the public sector in the education and health sectors. In fact, people who work in school boards, people who work in colleges, people who work in universities—that's the education sector—are not crown employees. They don't bargain under this act, Speaker; they bargain under the Ontario Labour Relations Act. Similarly, the people who work in the health sector are not, for the most part, direct crown employees. They don't bargain under the crown employees act either. In the health care sector, you've got lots of people who maybe are unionized in hospitals and places like that, who bargain under the Ontario Labour Relations Act, or, if they're doctors, don't really bargain

at all because they nominally don't belong to a union; they're nominally individual private businesses.

When you look at who this applies to, it actually does not apply to most people who work in the public sector, so it's a very oddly structured bill. There are a whole bunch of little oddities like that, but one of the things that strikes me as particularly peculiar is that it limits the term of a collective agreement to no more than one year. If somebody had said, "I want to be able to do the math," I could structure a collective agreement in my sleep to do this math for multiple years. It's not all that difficult. I'm asking myself: Why would you want to impose on people a one-year collective agreement? People who have done management or union-side bargaining know that, in many circumstances, it's to the mutual benefit of both the employer and the employees to have a multi-year agreement, because it tends to turn the thermostat down in the workplace when you've got a multi-year agreement. I had always thought that it's better to have good employee relations than to have bad employee relations. That seems to me like a no-brainer, whereas saying, "You must do this every year and have only one-year collective agreements" seems to me very odd.

The other thing is, it seems odd to me that when we have a government that is saying, "We really need to keep our compensation budgets to zero or to very small increases," and in fact we're looking in our budget at taking billions of dollars out of compensation increases, and when, as far as I know, the Leader of the Opposition is saying one should legislate a wage freeze, I see it as very odd indeed that this member of the Conservatives is saying "legislate increases." It actually costs more than what his own leader wants or what we want. I don't get it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure to rise in support of this legislation put forward by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

There's been a great deal of talk in the House lately about how we're going to avoid a collision with a \$411-billion provincial debt after nine years of wild Liberal spending. Truly, that's where we're headed now. It's a collision course that spells disaster for Ontario, an event that will turn us into Canada's Greece.

Of the important steps this bill takes to tackle the challenge head-on, there are a few that I think are particularly crucial to the future recovery and success of Ontario.

The first is that we tie total compensation packages for our public sector workers to the rate of Ontario's real economic growth per capita. Put simply, we ensure that compensation per public sector worker is not vastly outstripping our province's gross domestic product.

Speaker, this isn't a glamorous issue, but it is an important one. Pay per public sector employee is now over \$10,000 more than Ontario's per capita GDP. That means that for every citizen's share of our province's revenue, we're paying \$10,000 on top of that to our public sector workers.

That's not meant to vilify the hard-working men and women of Ontario's public sector. In fact, Speaker, I believe that if you talk to any one of them on a one-to-one basis, they will understand the need for getting our province's finances under control. A measure like Bill 94 is crucial to the continued success of strong government programs for our families and to the success of our public sector employees. They want to see their pensions protected, not frittered away by a government that can't understand how to properly read a balance sheet. They want to see programs strengthened, not cut because this Liberal government has been too ready to open its wallet at every available opportunity.

We need to be clear about what this bill is accomplishing. This is not about slashing the public sector, although I don't doubt a few of the members opposite may try to spin it as such. This is about finding a fresh path for Ontario that will ensure the security of the programs the government provides, not spending everything we have now and hoping it turns out okay, because that has been the approach for too long.

Fifty-five cents of every dollar this government spends is spent on public sector wages. It's a rate that is simply not sustainable in the long term. It never has been, and it has precious little chance of ever being a workable scheme when the members opposite are content to keep us on a path to a \$30-billion deficit.

That's not the goal of this side of the House, Speaker. If we're going to get spending under control, we need a different set of goals.

How about this? By tying public sector wages to the GDP, it only encourages all of us to work together for a stronger Ontario. It's a system of benefits that have immediate, tangible impacts.

Also in the interests of immediacy, my colleague has crafted another feature of this bill that will allow for a quick response to financial crisis just like the one this Liberal government has placed us in now. Multi-year compensation increase agreements are what have chained government spending to rising wages at times when we cannot afford to do so. Collective agreements will be limited to one year, after which wages are frozen until the budget is in fact balanced.

What we need, Speaker—and I think we can all agree—is a more agile, more mobile form of government, one that is no longer bloated on spending that comes at the cost of the great economy, one that can respond quickly in times of need and have the fiscal stability to do it.

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Our side of the House has already introduced a number of bills designed to meet those ends, including legislation to get an \$11-billion red tape burden under control or start paying down the principal on our massive debt.

My colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk has introduced an elegant bill that will bring us closer to the goal of effective, efficient government.

Finally, I applaud the bill for recognizing that our province's entire deficit could be erased if we brought

public sector compensation in line with private sector realities. Currently, our public sector wages far outstrip those of the private sector: a disparity of about 27%. If we brought that number in line with the realities of the private sector, which nobody here needs reminding is the true engine of the economy, we could save \$16 billion a year—\$16 billion, Speaker; erase the deficit; and get Ontario back on to the path of prosperity.

To paraphrase John Lennon—I won't sing it: Imagine there's no credit downgrades; it's easy if you try. I think that one could be a hit, don't you?

I say to my colleagues opposite: This is long-term planning. Short-term solutions will in fact be required, it's true, but we do ourselves a disservice as legislators and do the people of Ontario a disservice as taxpayers if we refuse to take the necessary steps today to strengthen the Ontario government of the future. That's why I fully support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think I have 45 seconds, Mr. Speaker, but I'll try.

I just want to commend the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, because I think he constantly brings intelligent, interesting bills forward for substantive debate.

I was mayor of a city, as my friend, who negotiated with CUPE from a defined benefit to a defined contribution, and saved the pension plan—the fellow I negotiated with is now the national president. It's sustainable, so I don't agree with you on that.

The issue is: Tying it to GDP growth is the exact opposite of what we should be doing. When I was mayor of Winnipeg, when I got elected, we were at 6.2% of the city's GDP; when I left, it was 4.7%. What you're going to do is build in a cost structure that will drive taxes up and services down. You should do the exact opposite. Government should shrink, over time, as a percentage of GDP.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Haldimand-Norfolk, you have two minutes for reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I really appreciate the discussion this afternoon. The NDP stressed the importance of consultation and negotiation, and I extend that into further discussion. In fact, we don't have much choice in Canada now, because of the Supreme Court rulings and that kind of discussion. Backroom deals and legislated mandatory ramming through proposals usually backfire down the road.

The NDP also addressed the proposal for a defined contribution pension plan and had some misgivings about public servants following provincial MPPs in going down that road, although we just recently heard from the Liberal side talk about negotiating just such a deal, taking a very large union in the municipal sector to defined contribution and indicating that it has turned out to be sustainable.

Another Liberal member talked about the German approach: government wage subsidies to retain private

sector workers during tough times, and helping with unemployment. In the context of the public sector, that's really not necessary, because they don't really lose their jobs during a recession.

We heard a warning from the government that if there is a second time, there will be no bailout, so we do have to look at some alternatives.

I thank my Progressive Conservative colleagues. The concern was raised that this government is not telling us where the unfunded liability of public sector pensions lies. We make the statement that you can no longer use tax money to buy labour peace, and it is high time to bring the public sector in line with the private sector.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll vote on this item at the end of private members' bills.

LIQUOR LICENCE AMENDMENT ACT (SERVING LIQUOR IN CERTAIN PLACES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL (SERVICE D'ALCOOL DANS CERTAINS LIEUX)

Mrs. Albanese moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 93, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act in relation to serving liquor in certain places / Projet de loi 93, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool relativement au service d'alcool dans certains lieux.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I will start again. It's an honour to rise in the House today for the second reading of my private member's bill, Bill 93, the Liquor Licence Amendment Act, serving liquor in certain places, 2012.

This bill is the result of attending many community meetings, of much consultation and input from my community of York South-Weston. I would like to especially thank the two city councillors in York South-Weston, Frances Nunziata, of Ward 11, with whom I've worked very closely on this issue, and councillor Frank Di Giorgio of Ward 12. I want to thank them for their dedication to combating the danger presented to our community by booze cans.

Also I would like to welcome to the gallery a member of the 12 Division Toronto police, Superintendent Mark Saunders. Welcome. His input and that of the other members of 12 Division have been crucial in forming this bill. I hope that together we can make a difference on this issue.

I also would like to take a moment to thank Andrew Robertson from my office and Monica Wyrzykowska, our OLIP intern, for all the research and the background work done on this private member's bill.

What is a booze can? Before I continue, I know that some of my colleagues here in the House may be asking,

what is a booze can? Booze cans are places where alcohol is illegally sold, either at an establishment that has a liquor licence and then proceeds to sell alcohol after permitted hours, or at an establishment that does not possess a liquor licence at all.

A booze can can thus be your local neighbourhood bar or restaurant operating after hours or, as is often the case in my riding, the back room of a barbershop or a music store. I am explaining this to my colleagues here because I know that not many of you have seen a barbershop open at 2 a.m. every day of the week in your riding. Sometimes these businesses only act as a front for booze cans. A music store may close its doors and only let in trusted clientele after certain hours. They are sort of like the speakeasies of the 1920s, where a password could get you through the door. Inside, alcohol is being sold illegally, or after hours. Owners of such establishments will often claim that they are throwing a private birthday party and that alcohol is being served, not sold. It is therefore very difficult for the police to gain entry to such booze cans in order to collect the necessary information for a warrant.

Now, you may be asking yourself, what is the problem with a private birthday party at a barbershop at 2 a.m. on a Tuesday? They are a public nuisance and often residents and local businesses complain about the noise they emit and the fire hazard they pose as too many patrons cram into small, unsafe rooms. But the truth is that alcohol and noise are not the main problem here. The problem that we are facing in York South-Weston, but also in other urban ridings, is that these booze cans attract a criminal element. They are a magnet for gang members and for crime, like drug trafficking, prostitution and gun violence, and they negatively affect the quality of life for the residents in the area by making them feel less safe, and afraid in their own backyard.

What will this bill do? Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to go into the details of Bill 93. The bill seeks to curb the illegal sale and service of alcohol and the operation of booze cans by giving police more tools needed to deter offenders.

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As we all know, the Liquor Licence Act regulates the licensing and the possession of alcohol in the province of Ontario. It already sets out offences and penalties for infractions of the act, such as selling to minors or selling liquor after hours, for example.

However, the Liquor Licence Act needs more teeth. My bill amends the act in two ways.

Firstly, it creates an offence of serving liquor in any place other than a residence, premises with a liquor licence or a private place, as defined by the regulations. This is important, because it will help police address those booze cans that are run in establishments like hairdressers' salons. Once a business closes its door to its customers, it practically becomes a private place. This is why police have difficulty prosecuting these booze cans that masquerade as private parties at a salon.

As I mentioned previously, these establishments are often very difficult to infiltrate. Often, the doorman will

only let in people that he knows or that are brought in by trusted friends, making the job of the police to get inside, undercover, extraordinarily difficult. In order to prove that an offence is taking place under the current provisions of the Liquor Licence Act, a police officer needs to get inside and document that alcohol is being sold. It can take months to gather the necessary evidence.

With this amendment, it will be an offence to serve alcohol at such so-called private parties, making it much easier for police to shut down these operations, given their already strained resources. Again, to repeat, truly private places like homes and backyards will not be affected by this amendment; neither will legitimate operators operating within a liquor licence.

Secondly, Bill 93 provides for penalties and bail conditions relating to the new offence, and a similar offence under the regulations. I heard from the community that many of the people running booze cans are repeat offenders. If they are caught running a booze can one day, they will often set up shop elsewhere the next. They may, for example, not sell the alcohol directly but act as a doorman or a manager. The offender may have their brother selling the alcohol, while they continue to bring their clientele with them. If passed, an individual caught illegally selling or serving alcohol would be subject to new, more stringent bail conditions. If this person is then caught again, procuring or being in possession of alcohol for the intent to traffic or being on premises where alcohol is illegally served or sold, the offender would be liable for additional penalties. The penalties for a conviction of this new offence would be a fine up to \$100,000 or imprisonment of not more than one year, or both. It would be possible to immediately suspend an establishment's liquor licence for at least seven days.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is important for making communities safer. Since having been elected in 2007, there have been a number of very disturbing incidents of violence in my riding. Allow me to give you a few recent examples of how booze cans can become the breeding ground for crime.

In February of last year, a man was shot in the head at a booze can on Weston Road and Lawrence. In early 2009, an early morning shooting at a suspected booze can claimed one man's life and left two other people wounded. The booze can was being operated in a small shop that sold CDs, movies and T-shirts. In 2008, a man was convicted for the 2006 murder of a young father, shot at close range in a booze can.

Not only are booze cans dangerous places, this danger can spill out onto the streets and affect innocent bystanders. Just this March, a man stumbled out of a booze can at around 3:30 a.m. on a Sunday morning and fired at least four shots through the windows of a condo building at 1 Hickory Tree Road in my riding. Luckily, nobody was injured, but you can only imagine the fear of the residents and what they must have felt. Enough is enough.

I know that other ridings in Toronto also suffer from problems of booze cans, although they differ in scale.

Last July, in the riding of Trinity–Spadina, police laid charges against a booze can that hosted 200 patrons a night after receiving a flood of complaints from area residents and businesses. That booze can was also operating under the front of a legitimate business during the day. It had been licensed as a yoga studio. The police had issued numerous tickets before then, but the booze can would just reopen the next day.

This is why it's so important to keep away repeat offenders from the premises of booze cans. The truth is that some of these booze cans can turn into more than a public nuisance; they can be life-threatening. It is paradoxical in some ways that municipalities have often lobbied for the relaxation of liquor laws, such as the extension of last call during certain festivals, but this approach does not work in all neighbourhoods. These pockets of crime affect the quality of life of local residents, and they paint a negative picture of otherwise lovely neighbourhoods. It makes people feel less proud and more fearful to walk down the street at night.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, I have painted a sufficient picture of the need for this bill. I understand that some stakeholders may have some concerns on certain aspects of this legislation and how it may affect them, but I can assure you the intent is not to penalize good operators or to unduly punish first-time offenders of otherwise legitimate establishments. This bill is not about shutting down a restaurant or withdrawing a licence because its last patron was sold a drink at 2:15 a.m.

As I learned through my consultations, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission already has not enough boots on the ground when enforcing the Liquor Licence Act. Thus, this bill is meant truly to empower our police forces to target the bad operators, the criminals, the booze can operators. It's about making sure a small group intent on operating a criminal enterprise can't bring their crime and their clientele into the wonderful neighbourhoods of York, York South–Weston, and elsewhere.

Toronto needs this bill because it is in a unique position in Ontario, and quite possibly in Canada, in that it has a third generation of gang culture, and this is the element that we want to go after.

Recognizing this fact, a motion has been put forward to Toronto city council by Councillors Frances Nunziata and Josh Colle to support my private member's bill, and it is being debated this afternoon. I hope that the result of the vote will be positive.

So, Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe that our neighbours have a right to feel safe on their streets, on their property and in their homes. We need fewer people under the influence of alcohol selling drugs or stolen property. We don't want bar patrons discharging firearms after they stagger out of a bar.

I want to thank everyone for listening to me and for giving me the opportunity to speak to my bill, the Liquor Licence Amendment Act (Serving Liquor in Certain Places), 2012. I hope that every member of this Legislature, although maybe not facing the same challenges that we face in our area, will be supporting my bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today and speak on behalf of the PC caucus in support of Bill 93, the Liquor Licence Amendment Act.

The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes wrote, "Covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all." Hobbes speaks to the need to have sufficient and enforceable penalties attached to deterrent laws so that government is properly empowered to protect its community.

This is what the Legislature, I think, is trying to do. I don't mean to speak for the member for York South–Weston, but I think that's exactly what we're trying to accomplish here today with this bill, and by passing Bill 93 I think we'd go a long way towards doing that.

The bill imposes tougher penalties and more stringent bail conditions on offenders, including not being able to attend places where liquors are being served, not being able to attend places where liquors are licensed to be sold outside of the prescribed hours of operation, and not being able to possess more liquor than is deemed reasonable for their personal use, except at their residences.

I've spoken to our own police department in Barrie about this bill—they actually approached me originally to talk about it—and they certainly are supportive of it. I know that for many people in the GTA especially, this is of concern. I went to university here, and I know of booze cans. I know what they do. I may or may not have ever been to one, but—

Interjections.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'm just saying—but they can be a place where nefarious things do happen. Without the controls in place to make sure our children are safe from the types of things the member explained can happen at these places—I think we really need to keep an eye on that and make sure that our police forces have the right tools to deal with these problems when they arise.

1450

I know that Toronto city council itself has also tabled a motion—I'm not sure where it is at—in support of this, because it is also a problem in Toronto. I did mean to mention earlier that in Barrie it's becoming an issue more and more. As Barrie grows and is a little bit uncomfortable in its skin and is turning into a little bit of a larger urban area, this is becoming a problem, and it's becoming a problem at hours when we don't normally have problems in a city like Barrie.

Hopefully, this will start to nip those things in the bud, where we actually are able to deal with the growth we see in some of our communities that we all represent around here. It's not just a Toronto problem; it's one that's growing into other communities around the area.

One big benefit of this bill is that it boosts the protection against underage drinking as well. Underage drinking is becoming more and more of a problem. An independent study shows that one in five minors who enters the LCBO can walk out with alcohol—one in five minors. That seems to be kind of astounding. If govern-

ment agencies like the LCBO can't stop all underage youth from buying alcohol, imagine how easy it is for them to get alcohol if they go to a place where they're not even checking IDs. They're not interested in the ID; they're more interested in who you are and who you know and whether you know the password to get in.

The level of compliance is going to be much higher if we can control a little bit more who's selling alcohol. That's not to say that we can't expect total compliance from those people either. People who don't bother obtaining a liquor licence will never bother to check ID. They're already breaking the law, and it's not even an issue for them. It's just going to become a danger for our youth. Let's face it: Most of the people attending these booze cans in many cases are youth. They make a lot of money at these booze cans too. They're not selling beer for \$5 a bottle; it's going for at least double or more—so I hear.

In doing so, we're going to save a lot of lives. According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving, two out of five youths killed on the road have been drinking. If this does anything to stem the tide of the problem of drunk driving in our communities, especially when it comes to youth awareness, we've made some ground on this issue.

I do have a couple of comments of warning that we need to be careful about. We need to ensure we're not overburdening our legitimate vendors. We need to make sure that law-abiding vendors and establishment owners aren't overburdened. I'll give you an example. In Barrie, Miss Miranda Fox owns a salon called Three Small Rooms. It has become quite a well-known success story in Barrie, where she has become licensed and is selling wine and, I think, champagne and maybe beer—I'm not sure—to her clients while they go to the salon and are having their hair done or their feet manicured or whatnot. It's certainly not intended to be a booze can; it has never been accused of being a booze can of any sort. They close at regular hours. There's nothing nefarious going on after hours. Her business is succeeding very well as a result of being able to offer alcohol to her clients responsibly and in a licensed environment. We need to be very careful that we don't limit legitimate vendors' ability to make a good living from selling alcohol legitimately.

It's also worth noting that the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association observes major concerns with strengthening penalties and making sure that—I guess they're worried that first-time offenders are being punished more harshly without the opportunity to become fully compliant. So they do have some concerns around how this bill will be implemented. I don't think their concerns are something that is not easily addressed, and I'm not at all sure that that's what the bill is trying to address anyway. But I think it's important that that discussion happens, whether it's at committee or here in the Legislature: that we make sure we're not overburdening people who are actually responsible vendors of alcohol and that we help small business do what they do best and create jobs and provide services to our residents.

With that said, thank you very much to the member from York South–Weston for bringing this forward for discussion. I enjoyed speaking to it and I hope that we move forward and have good, productive discussion and make sure that we, like I said, move ahead in a way that doesn't burden current business owners in doing business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's my privilege, as always, to stand and speak on behalf of my community in Davenport. It's also my great honour and pleasure to welcome my dad to the House today. Please, if you could give him a welcome. Thanks.

I will be speaking in support of Bill 93 today. The member from York South–Weston and I share a common boundary and a common part of the city and many similar issues. I think that the bill identifies a real issue in our community. We do have after-hours drinking establishments, booze cans, after-hours parties, and it is a problem that we do hear from community members.

I think that we should note, however, that booze cans are already illegal, and so in some ways this is just doing a little bit, but perhaps what we really need to do, in my mind, is further community engagement in our neighbourhoods, working with police officers—I'm glad to see we have local police here today—but also working with community groups, with BIAs, with young people and neighbourhood leaders to identify this issue, to co-operate and make sure that we have safe communities.

I think that we have a lot of issues, whether it's in York South–Weston or in Davenport. There's a lot of people struggling in Davenport, and in York South–Weston as well, people who are new to the country, people who are struggling on low incomes. I'm a little bit concerned that we aren't looking at really the key issues here, the root causes that lead people to get into trouble after hours. In my experience, when I speak to folks, what they're looking for, particularly young people—and the member from Barrie was commenting that there's a lot of young people using booze cans. Young people in Davenport are looking for opportunities, and I think when we look at gang violence in this city and we look at it only from a law-and-order perspective, we fail to take note of what's going on in the minds of young people in Toronto. And what's going on in the minds of young people that I talk to are real concerns about a lack of opportunity, going forward.

People have record student debt when they graduate from school. They have huge barriers because we have the highest post-secondary tuition in the country right now in Ontario, and young people know that when they do graduate, they graduate with very poor job opportunities and jobs that hardly pay. I think that these are some of the kinds of underlying things that we need to address in Davenport, that we need to make sure that people do feel hopeful, that they don't despair, and that we have community supports in place as well, because there's a lot of young people I speak to who don't have

anything. They don't have recreation programs; there's nothing to do after school. These are the things I think we must address.

But the important thing is around community engagement. We've had some success where communities are engaged, and that's an important part of it. We need to make sure that police have the tools that they need and that police resources are allocated in a way that makes sense. Particularly in Toronto, sometimes we see police officers working at construction sites, where we could be allocating those resources to much more pertinent needs like after-hours establishments.

I do think that in the end it is about re-engaging our communities and making sure that people don't despair, that people do feel hope, and making sure that people do have job opportunities. So whether it's in Davenport or York South-Weston, seeing leadership on the ground, seeing positive leadership, is really important. We've been doing things in our community in Davenport to try to re-engage people. We just had the largest soccer festival in the history of this city, I think—or the largest soccer game, I should say—where 120 people from every nationality in the riding, from every age group, men and women, boys and girls, came out to play soccer together on a Saturday night. To me, it's about getting to know your neighbours, and when you know your neighbours, you act responsibly in your neighbourhood. That's the kind of thing that I think we need to be doing.

1500

We need to be creating employment opportunities in our communities, and that's why I think it's absolutely vital in the west end of the city that we get good transit so that people can get into our communities, that we have an electric train on our air-rail link, that Davenport should be served by good transit, that York South-Weston should be served by good transit, and we need to promote the things that already work—community outreach around the streetcar in our community. Few people know you can get on and off the St. Clair streetcar for the price of one ticket, a two-hour transfer. That's something that hasn't been promoted well enough in the past, and it has to be promoted more, going forward.

Overall, I think that the bill is good. As I said, we already have booze cans that are illegal, and the important thing is that we have a chance to support law enforcement to get in there, but also to make sure that young people have better things to do. So we'll be supporting this bill, but in some ways I would rather spend time in here talking about some of those root causes. We've seen the effects of a war on drugs in North America, and we can open a new front in the war on illegal alcohol, and that's fine, but what we should be talking about is good employment in Ontario, good jobs, creating good transit. Those are the things that I would rather focus my attention on.

I'm going to stop there so I can share some time with my colleague. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm delighted to be able to rise in support of my colleague's Bill 93.

Years ago, I was in Chicago, and I actually went to a school that was around the corner from where the famous Valentine's Day massacre occurred. Of course, they had a lot of booze cans back then. I didn't think about the impact that a booze can actually has on a community today; I thought it was something of the past. Then I read—and I'd like to put this in the record. I'm sure Superintendent Mark Saunders of 12 Division will allow me to do this:

"As unit commander I receive many complaints concerning the negative impact on quality of life and safety concerns due to the residual activities that occur due to booze cans in their neighbourhood. MPP Albanese has attended many community meetings and heard first-hand how these booze cans have increased the fear of victimization in the neighbourhoods that they exist in. This amendment would grant the police service with a strong sustainable approach in reducing and eliminating the criminal activities and regain public safety in our communities."

So, in essence, what's happening is that either a legal bar is opening up after its normal closing hour of 2 o'clock—and not everybody who goes to a bar is unemployed. So it's an illegal activity that is occurring and is aided and abetted by the owner, or it's an illegal activity where someone isn't permitted to sell any booze because they don't have a licence, and it's still an illegal, criminal activity. People are participating in this, and it is victimizing the neighbourhood. It's making a difference in the community in terms of safety, and there are not the tools in place to allow the police to deal with these two very difficult situations.

You would think there might be some responsibility from the people who own the establishments legally, but obviously not, because they get to sell more and so they get to pocket more. So they need to be punished for that illegal activity. And then you have those who just knowingly do it and it's illegal, and who knows if they're even selling to people of legal age? The police need the tools so that they too can be shut down.

Every community deserves to have an opportunity to have a safe community, one in which they feel they can walk around, where their children can play, where there isn't a fear of not being able to get to their front door in a safe way.

We support our police services and give them the responsibility to ensure that safety in a community. They can only do it if they have the tools with which to do it. MPP Albanese has identified a big gap in that responsibility that we've given the police, and it's time to fill that gap by supporting Bill 93 and ensuring that they are able to do the job. We are so very proud of the work that they do—and I have to say that I don't even have a police station in my riding. Go figure. I have one on either side of me—I'm surrounded—but none in my riding. But I do count on those gentlemen and ladies to ensure that there is safety in my community.

I applaud you, MPP Albanese, for bringing this forward. I look forward to supporting it, and I'm sure my colleagues from across the floor, as I've heard, will support it as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I also applaud Ms. Albanese, the member from York South–Weston. The intent of the bill is very clear, as our critic, Sylvia Jones, has mentioned in briefing caucus here. It is an attempt to curb the illegal sale and service of alcohol and the operation of establishments that do so, commonly known as booze cans. What it does is it creates a special offence for serving liquor in a place other than your home or currently legal possession. No one wants that in their neighbourhood, for the very reasons that have been stated.

I would only say that on our side, I think the police have the tools today, in many respects. I would say that I'm happy that a member of the Toronto force is here. I can't say, in my 17 years here and in my 10 or 15 years on local or regional council, I heard it.

Today, one of the things I want to put on the table is, what I see is these cars driving around that will deliver the booze to your house. I don't know how they do it, actually. I guess they phone the person, and the person trusts you and they go to the liquor store and buy the booze and deliver it to your house. How do you know they're not minors? That's something there.

I would suggest that this bill should pass. I would suggest that it should have hearings, because, as some of the other speakers said, they really weren't sure what a booze can was. I'm old enough to have probably gone to them, in the old days, I guess. I would say that the bill should probably go for a bit of public hearings. It's the right thing to make our communities safer. But I don't want people visiting my home when I have a few people over for cards and there's money on the table. You could say that they're buying their booze. They could be, in fact, supporting that person that's hosting the card game or something.

Anyway, those are my feelings on the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a pleasure to stand in this place and represent people from Parkdale–High Park and, in fact, people from across Ontario. That's what we all do here.

Yes, I agree with the other speakers. Certainly this bill should pass on a voice vote, I hope.

I just want to point out to the member a few ways of, maybe, dealing with the problem that, perhaps, have been not tried in York South–Weston; I don't know. I can tell you what we do in Parkdale–High Park—and kudos to the police. I would say, first of all, that our major problem is not booze cans in Parkdale–High Park; our major problem in Parkdale–High Park are those who are licensed to sell liquor and who over-serve and who don't check identification. The problem there is, as we all know, it's very, very difficult in this province to get a

liquor licence; it takes a long time. But once you get one, it's almost impossible to get that away from the owner of the liquor licence, despite everything that they do. I've talked to our police about this, both 14 and 11 divisions. Really, unless you have a pretty solid vice division in your police force who can literally sit there until they break the law—you have to catch them in the act, as the officer will know. Police have better things to do with their time than sit in a bar that's serving booze illegally, even with a licence. That's our problem.

The way that we dealt with it, and I hear from our small business—and to me, this is also a problem for small business because, if you are on either side of either a booze can or a place that's serving liquor illegally, even if they have a licence, you've got problems. You've got problems with your own business very, very quickly. It's very, very frustrating because it's kind of the ministry's responsibility; it's kind of a police problem. In short, it's a community problem, as my friend from Davenport said.

What we've done is, we've set up a problem property task force. That's the name of it, Mr. Speaker. Guess what they do? The councillor sits down with the police, and they sit down at regular times and look at just that: problem properties. It could be a meth lab. It could be a booze can. It could be someone who's running an illegal rooming house and not living up to fire codes etc. It could be many things, but it works. That's the bottom line: It works.

Does adding stiffer penalties work? You know what? In just about every other realm of law enforcement, we can pretty well show that they don't, unfortunately. Stiffer penalties aren't deterrents to people who want to sell booze illegally. What is a deterrent is if you've got your councillor, your municipal staff, your police all sitting around a table and you've decided that for this time you're going to focus on one problem property and you're going to fix it.

1510

I can tell you that it worked extremely well in Parkdale–High Park: A meth lab was busted in our community, and it was busted because they worked together. The councillor, the municipal staff and the police worked together to focus on getting rid of this one problem area. Now we're doing the same thing with our problems of over-serving or not checking ID in some of our liquor establishments, or sometimes it's just pure noise levels that become a real problem in communities.

Yes, booze cans—unfortunately, I have to say that despite this bill, and I know it has very good intentions—they're going to be with us. Booze cans will be with us always. You heard it here first. They've been here all through my life, and I'm sure through another few lifetimes they're going to be there, too. So we really do have to look at the broader way of dealing with issues like this.

I want to just add to what my friend from Davenport said. We have to remember that, for example, the LGBT community—guess how they started? All the clubs in Toronto at a certain point—I'm old enough to remember

when there were still some pretty debilitating laws around LGBT people. They gathered in places that were illegal, because that's where they felt safe. So I'm just saying that we have to be very careful. That's why I'm hoping that when this goes to committee we're not targeting racialized communities, people who just don't understand the laws, but that we're really making this broad enough and looking at maybe some amendments to strengthen the way we look at this, for example, the liquor licensing laws and enforcement themselves.

I can tell you that if other communities have the problems my community has in just cracking down on those who have licences, we're never going to be able to get to those who don't have licences. The first thing we have to do is to be able to enforce the laws we have, and we're not doing that very well. We're simply not doing that very well.

My suggestion to the member, if you haven't tried it yet, is the problem property task force—a really good thing to try; a very, very good thing to try. It works, and we've proven it works in Parkdale–High Park. I'm sure we're not alone in that, but it has worked there.

Yes, let's get it going. I think she has highlighted an issue that needs addressing. There are lots of aspects of that issue, so it would be good to have hearings about it so that we can hear the breadth and depth of the problem.

Finally, just to buttress what the member from Davenport said, surely there are bigger fish to fry, as the saying goes. Especially in York South–Weston, especially in Davenport and especially in Parkdale–High Park, we have problems of poverty; we have problems of joblessness; we have the problem of youth encumbered by debt, with no prospects. That's the source of the other problems that end up becoming criminal problems.

If we can get to the root causes, we are always much better off. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me a chance, and thank you to the member for bringing it forth.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak in favour of Bill 93, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act in relation to serving liquor in certain places. This bill endeavours to put new and effective tools in the hands of our police officers as they battle the problem of after-hours booze cans and the illegal sale or service of alcohol in the greater Toronto area and beyond.

While some may see this as a problem more prevalent in the downtown core, there are pockets of this type of activity occurring in communities across urban sectors. They may operate for months without an incident, but we all know that these after-hours bars frequently have other criminal activities that associate and collaborate with this operation. They become hangouts, and they become a meeting place for gang members, drug dealers and prostitutes. These places then also become a source of revenue, which further escalates and perpetuates these problems.

To make matters worse, these dens of criminal activity are frequently located just down the street from neighbourhoods where families and their children should be feeling safe and secure. I know that as a government we all want to find ways to discourage activity that makes our communities and our families feel threatened. A booze can can be in a basement apartment, it can be near a main street; it can be in the back of a local store or a nearby restaurant when the blinds are drawn after the legal hours of service of alcohol are over. These places where the activities occur can be anywhere. They don't differentiate between what one may characterize as a good or a bad neighbourhood. They spring up where money is to be made.

As we've heard, in MPP Albanese's riding, York–South Weston, there have been numbers of incidences relating to the operation of booze cans that have shocked and frightened law-abiding residents. Just this weekend, Toronto's sense of security was shattered by a senseless act of violence with alleged ties to gang activity. Suddenly, the downtown core didn't seem so safe any more. Our city's reputation as a peaceful place was shattered.

Gang culture cannot be allowed to flourish in our city. Our police officers are on the street every day, working hard to keep us safe, but they need our help to be certain that they have the authority and the resources they need to do this. We have to do everything we can to prevent youth from becoming part of these groups, to deter criminal activity and to cut off the sources of revenue that are the incentive for individuals taking part.

To achieve this, my colleague from York South–Weston went to her community, city councillors, 12 Division of the Toronto Police Service and her local business improvement areas to find out what they needed to make their community a better place. Bill 93 is a direct result of that outreach.

If passed, I can see this bill having a very positive effect across the city. The harsher penalties and bail conditions contained in Bill 93 can help ensure that the illegal sale and service of alcohol becomes less lucrative, even for a new offender. This bill makes it an offence for a person who's been arrested and charged, once released, even to be on the premises where alcohol is being served or sold illegally.

We need legislation like this because it will make people think twice and understand that there are serious consequences. This bill sensibly sets out a thoughtful and researched approach on how to provide law enforcement with a more substantial method of achieving a better quality of life for all of us.

I support this bill, and I'm proud to be part of a government that's doing so much to support police officers in our community.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I rise to speak against Bill 93, the act to amend the Liquor Licence Act in relation to certain places. I oppose this bill. I do not condone illegal

activities, but this bill is over-policing. It is excessive penalization; it is redundant, unnecessary legislation.

We already have legislation and regulations and enforcement people to control these illegal activities, these booze cans and the like. We don't need any more rules. The temptation to write more legislation, as in this case, does nothing but create more unneeded red tape and tends to take away from our rights and our freedoms.

We must never forget the most important thing about being Canadian. It is defined in our Constitution as our right to life, liberty and justice. As we write more laws and regulations, we confuse justice with policing. We infringe upon our liberties. We lose our freedoms and, consequently, we reduce the quality of life for Canadians. We must be very careful that what we do in this House does not reduce or restrict the freedoms of Canadians, regardless of how good our intentions are.

In this case, we have been advised by the Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association that they are afraid that the severe penalties of this legislation will have the unreasonable and unfair effect of putting some small or new enterprises out of business. For any establishment, a temporary withdrawal of their liquor licence would be devastating. We need to be helping small businesses, not putting them out of business.

We have enough laws to stop these illegal activities. We don't need any more. We must protect the rights and freedoms of people. We must vote against this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I've always sort of enjoyed the sort of extremist kinds of property rights views, but I've never understood defending the right to illegally sell alcohol after hours. And I don't think we have, Mr. Speaker, any laws right now that effectively restrict what are quaintly known in the back alleys and neighbourhoods of Toronto Centre as more than booze cans; they're called after-hours clubs. The only thing that's true about them is they are after hours. There's no formal club or anything like that. I live in the Distillery District, which is sort of legendary, because Joe Kennedy and Al Capone made various visits there to what is now a parking lot—it used to be the edge of the lake—and illicitly took booze across the border to there.

1520

So we can get into a debate about Prohibition. If we want to really talk about excessive legislation, I would certainly agree that completely banning alcohol is probably the heavy hand of the state gone too far.

I also find it kind of interesting: I remember there were gay after-hours clubs. I don't remember that we ever had to—I mean, you have to go back. I think my friend from Barrie—I thought I was the only bad boy in the House. Obviously, I'm not alone. It's reassuring to know that. I don't remember our community ever having a really difficult time in those communities, getting liquor licences, but we did find some very creative ways to find places to drink, unfortunately sometimes at the expense of our neighbours. If you ask me, when I was 18

or 17—of course, I would never admit that I was ever drinking alcohol at that age, but I'm sure there were people who were. There are certain scales of breaking the law, and then there are chronic problems.

The challenge that we have is over-service of alcohol. It's something I agree on with the member from Parkdale-High Park. We've often had huge problems with Brewers Retail in my constituency, where I have some that operate very professionally. I have others where selling singles very legally is as much of a problem because the audience for that, or the constituency for that, is people with severe chemical dependencies. That kind of practice can make a neighbourhood almost unliveable because people are throwing up, invading people's backyards and making the basic enjoyment of the liberties and freedoms that my friend talked about almost impossible. I think if he actually represented or spent maybe more time in an urban constituency, the freedom to enjoy one's property or to have your children out in the backyard in the evening and feel safe is important.

One of the things I give my friend from York South-Weston a great deal of credit for is listening very carefully to her community and working with Councillor Nunziata and others, Councillor Colle, bringing these very basic, meaningful neighbourhood issues to the Legislature. One of my favourite times in this Legislature is private members' time because it's the time, I think, when it brings out the best in us. It allows us to be a little bit more complete and whole to our values and less restricted by the partisan discipline that's required to maintain government and opposition—and that you actually see things where real community need is being met. I think my friend from York South-Weston is bringing one of those very basic building blocks. It reflects, quite frankly, her personal integrity and her humility.

I have met very few people in my public life who have such a small ego, who are so gracious and generous to their constituents and who spend more time standing beside and behind their constituents to get the things done that she needs getting done. She said to me a few times, "If you don't worry about who gets the credit, you get a lot more done." That's a rather unusual streak of character in a politician and one that makes me very proud that she's a member of our team. I hope that we will be inspired by that spirit. Though this isn't—you're right—going to end every social problem, it's one of those small building blocks that just make life a little more liveable. And thank you very much because my time has run out.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I've just got a few seconds left here to speak. I applaud the member for bringing forward her bill and I also applaud members here. It helps bring debate and other points of view. I support this bill because I think it's going to reduce the number of drunk drivers on the road, and anything we can do to ease the road from drunk driving is a plus in my book. Congratulations and thank you to both of you for your opinions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for York South–Weston, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I was just learning that city council has approved the motion in support of the bill that we are debating. That, obviously, is very encouraging.

I want to thank all the members that have spoken to my bill: the members from Barrie, Davenport, Etobicoke Centre, Durham, Parkdale–High Park, Brampton–Springdale, Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Toronto Centre and Elgin–Middlesex–London. Thank you for your input. It's interesting to learn that, however concerning, the issue affects places that go beyond Toronto. Yes, it can help with underage drinking. It can help with drunk driving, we hope, in any way. The intent, again, is not that of targeting and penalizing the regular restaurant or the good establishment; absolutely not. I look forward to improving this bill in any way possible through the committee process.

I want to also say that the community groups in my community, the BIAs, have all been supportive of this bill, and I wanted for a moment to address the community engagement component that has been brought forward. Yes, our young people and residents in general need the opportunity for good jobs, but how does that begin if you don't even have a safe neighbourhood? You need to have the opportunity and the freedom to live in a healthy neighbourhood where you can take your kids outside to play, where you can feel safe and not feel that you're going to be the target of crime and of a bullet.

Anyway, I want to thank you all for your comments and thank you for your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll vote on this bill at the end of other private business.

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(RISK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS
FOR AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES ASSURANCES
(SYSTÈMES DE CLASSEMENT DES
RISQUES
EN ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE)

Mr. Singh moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to amend the Insurance Act with respect to risk classification systems for automobile insurance / Projet de loi 45, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances à l'égard des systèmes de classement des risques en assurance-automobile.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to acknowledge a number of constituents who are here today—senior clubs, youth, some of

my staff from the constituency, some of the Italian community as well—all in support of this bill.

I want to address essentially an issue, at its fundamental core, of fairness, and it's the fairness in setting auto insurance premiums here in Ontario. Before we begin, a couple of facts to start it off with. The way the auto insurance system works here in Ontario is, there are 10 territories based here in the greater Toronto area and about 45 territories outside of the greater Toronto area. Rates are set based on these territories. A good driver with a clean driving record on one side of the street may pay as much as 100% more for their insurance than a driver on the other side of the street. Across the GTA, including the city of Toronto, there are differences of more than 100%. That means that people are paying more than twice the rates of another driver of the same age, same driving record and same make and model of car. This is something that is simply unfair.

To put it clearly, these drivers are driving the exact same roads. They're driving on the same 400-series highways. They're driving through the same cycling and pedestrian traffic. They're driving in the exact same weather conditions. There's no difference in weather conditions within the GTA. They're driving in the exact same conditions but for one difference: their neighbours are different. And because their neighbours are different, because their neighbourhoods are different, they're paying twice as much as another driver.

Just imagine: You decide to move your family closer to your aging parents or you decide that you want to get a bigger house so that your children have their own bedroom. Just by moving a couple of blocks down the road, just by moving a couple of streets away, did you become a worse driver? Of course not. That doesn't make you a worse driver, but this is exactly what's happening. People are being treated as worse drivers simply by moving some blocks away, some kilometres away.

1530

We received an email from Nina Silver, and she wrote that she moved from North York to Weston—she moved because it was closer to her work. Here's what she said to us, "When I went to update my car insurance papers after my move, I discovered that my new car insurance premium was going to cost me \$850 more for the year simply because of a change in my home address." She also adds, "I am a mature driver, with no accident record," and "have never made a claim." She's never made a claim in her life, yet her insurance went up \$850 just by moving a short distance away.

Jacqueline Chouinard recounts a similar story. She had a spotless driving record. She also lives in the Weston area. She writes, "I moved here two years ago from Milton, Ontario. I now pay twice the price for insurance that I previously have. I also drive half of the kilometres than I" previously drove, "along the same roads as everyone else who lives in the greater Toronto area. I was also told I now live near Jane and Finch, the worst postal code in Canada for insurance rates. I actually live several kilo-

metres away from that intersection. I don't see the justice in this, it is clearly discrimination."

And just to be clear, some might cite that different neighbourhoods have different crime rates, perhaps car thefts and vandalism, and that might account for the difference—absolutely not. At most—and these are records that you can confirm through the government regulator statistics—vehicle thefts and vandalism account for between 3% and 4% of the premium costs. So that does not substantiate the differences in premiums.

Even if you look at claim rates, the insurance companies' own records will show you that at the extreme level, the most difference is 33% between different ridings or different territories—33% in terms of claim rates. But our premiums are 100% different at most. That's simply not substantiated; it's not fair. There is something else going on here, something that simply isn't fair and, quite frankly, something that has to change, because the status quo in Ontario is not working.

The purpose of this bill is very simple. The purpose of this bill is to ban the discrimination on the basis of the neighbourhood that you live in. In other words, what's happening is, bad drivers who have a bad record, who have accident claims, who have convictions, who live in the right neighbourhoods—so bad drivers who live in the right neighbourhoods—are getting a discount for living in that riding, for living in that discounted area, but good drivers with clean records, who have never made a claim in their life, are unfairly facing a discriminatory increase in their rates simply based on where they live.

And here is the heart of the matter—this heart of the matter is this: 80% to 90% of people in Ontario never make a claim in their lives. Let me just repeat that again so we understand—these are statistics that the Insurance Bureau of Canada will gladly release to you: 80% to 90% of people here in Ontario will never make a claim in their life, and despite that, if they live in the wrong neighbourhood in the GTA or the wrong neighbourhood in Hamilton, they're going to pay twice the amount that another driver pays who is the exact same in terms of their driving record, in terms of their accident claims, in terms of their age, in terms of their vehicle. These drivers don't cost the insurance industry a penny, they don't cost the industry anything, yet they're still being charged unfairly high premiums.

Now, there has been some misunderstanding about the bill, and I want to clarify this right now. This bill doesn't mean that there will be an equalization of rates across Ontario; rather, the bill will require an equalization of rates within the same demographic area, the same census metropolitan area—simply stated, the same city. So within the greater Toronto area, you would be ranked or you would be rated based on your driving ability, based on your convictions, based on your driving record—not based on who your neighbours are, what neighbourhood you live in, what street you live on.

We understand very well that the Golden Horseshoe and other high-density areas in the south cost the industry more money. They can continue to create those regions;

however, they can't further subdivide a region unfairly. We have built ample opportunities in this bill to allow insurers to recover the costs of providing coverage to GTA drivers. We want to ensure that these cost measures are done in a fair manner.

The point of our bill has been validated by the experts. We've received testimony from experts, and we received a letter from an expert who clarifies this point dead on. I have a letter with me from Professor Mary Hardy; she is a CIBC professor for actuarial studies at Waterloo. She confirms this point in no uncertain terms, very clearly, that, "An individual who moves from one area of Toronto to another, with similar driving exposure, does not suddenly become a worse driver but their premiums may double." She also notes, and this is an important note that I want people to pay close attention to—contrary to the claims made by some people that northern members or rural Ontarians will be negatively impacted, she writes to the contrary very, very clearly, as an actuarial scientist, as an expert in the field, "There is no reason why the premiums outside the major" urban areas "should change."

In fact, we also heard testimony at the auto insurance committee from another actuarial scientist that, based on the language used, it can ensure that the premiums would remain affected only in a localized area, only within the GTA or in Hamilton, and would not impact those outside those areas.

MADD has raised some issues—MADD Canada specifically has raised some issues. I want to address the concerns here and now. MADD has claimed that drivers who have a bad record will somehow be let off the hook, that bad drivers who are convicted of offences will somehow get a benefit and they would be subsidized by good drivers. That is absolutely not true. The way the bill is written right now, it's not true, but if there is any concern about that, the first rating criteria was driving safety record. If there is any confusion, I am more than happy to include an amendment that would clarify the language to include a conviction, because that's what it should read. It should be understood to be that a driver with highway traffic offences that are related to their driving, a driver with Criminal Code convictions related to driving, should have a higher rate. That's simple. That's common sense. But those who have a safe driving record—no convictions—should not have to suffer.

Brian Patterson, the president of the Ontario Safety League, was presented with the president of MADD Canada's comments. In the committee, he responded to the concerns of the president of MADD Canada. He stated, "I'm not sure on what basis he drew those conclusions. Those would not be consistent with the conclusions we've drawn," and "I don't see the risks," when responding to MADD Canada's concerns that this would somehow subsidize bad drivers. So Mr. Patterson, the president of the Ontario Safety League, has responded in that manner.

The bottom line is this: The status quo here in Ontario is not working. It's not working for the people; it's not working for the drivers. We're open to constructive

criticism, but let's have a dialogue that puts people first, puts the drivers first, and doesn't put the insurance companies first.

We've received a number of very positive suggestions, so let me pre-empt your suggestions now. We know that make, model and car are important criteria that should be added. We know that the language around convictions can be clarified so that convictions are clearly stated, both Criminal Code and highway traffic offences. We know that the regional issues can be clarified further with the right language.

But let's agree on this one point: It's simply wrong to charge the exact same driver more because he or she lives on a different street or in a different postal code. That's the matter. We don't want a system that's based on unfairness, and that's the way it is today. Let's change that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

1540

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'll be sharing my time with the member for Sault Ste. Marie.

I'm very pleased to speak on Bill 45, introduced by the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton. I'm not going to mince words. Bill 45 is a bad bill. It deals with the symptoms, not the real root cause. I cannot support it. If passed, it will divide Ontarians.

We all want lower insurance rates—no question about it—but not at the cost of those fellow Ontarians who contribute almost zero towards auto insurance fraud.

On April 26, 2012, the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton, in this House, asserted, "What I'm saying is that fraud is not the majority cause of the increase in our insurance rates." However, he did not support his assertion with any reliable survey or any concrete data. When I say this, I mean, has the member opposite conducted any survey himself or has he collected any data himself and analyzed it? If indeed he has such data, I urge him to share that with this House.

According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, "For every \$1 that the constituents of Bramalea-Gore-Malton pay into the auto insurance system, \$1.28 is paid out in claims." I would like to ask the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton, can he explain why? He may pretend not to know, or he may not like to explain it.

The Auditor General of Ontario, in his 2011 annual report, clearly explained the why: "Claims payments are the largest driver of the cost of auto insurance premiums, and with the average injury claim in Ontario of about \$56,000 being five times more than the average claim in other provinces...."

Mr. Speaker, auto insurance fraud is the most dreadful beast that must be tackled first and foremost. I urge the member opposite not to waste more of his time, and devote his attention on how to tackle the real problem: auto insurance fraud. This is why I introduced my own private member's bill last year and earlier this year that would deal with auto insurance fraud.

According to the interim report of the anti-fraud task force, fraudulent activity, and in particular, premeditated and organized fraud, has been on the increase, especially in the greater Toronto area.

Bill 45 proposes to ban the practice of territorial rating. It would hardly be fair to many Ontarians and especially to people living in northern Ontario whose claim costs are only 30% of the costs in the GTA. Has the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton spoken to his colleagues from the north? Are they supportive of increasing insurance rates for their constituents?

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that there are many factors that determine insurance rates. Where you live is only one factor. The car you drive has an impact. Your driving record has an impact. Where you live and where you drive has an impact. Whether you drive to work has an impact. The rate of accidents, fraud, vandalism, and theft all have an impact on your rates.

I would be pleased to say that the member opposite hasn't done his homework. Today, in the Windsor Star, he admitted and acknowledged that driving records not being included in the original bill was an oversight. The bill is so flawed that it will reduce rates for people convicted of drunk driving and who drive luxury cars while raising rates for responsible drivers and for those who live in northern and rural areas.

Look at what Andrew Murie, CEO of Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada stated, "The bill will force responsible drivers to subsidize the insurance premiums of dangerous drivers ... in our view, the bill sends all the wrong messages, punishes responsible drivers, rewards dangerous drivers, and will increase the risk to Ontario road users."

Mr. Speaker, Jim Christie, president of the OPP Association, said "Safe drivers subsidizing dangerous drivers is an outcome that the OPP Association cannot support. If successful, this bill will punish law-abiding drivers so that dangerous drivers and drivers with poor driving habits can pay less for insurance in this province."

Mr. Speaker, the record of respective governments tells the whole story. Our government has kept insurance rates below the inflation rate. Instead of pitting one group of people against another, we are addressing the pressure of premiums head on, and the reforms our government introduced in 2010 are working. On April 17, 2012, the Toronto Star reported that auto insurance rates were stabilizing, and they fell in the last quarter. When the NDP was in power, the rates went up by 27%, and under the PCs by 45%.

According to information provided by the Insurance Bureau of Canada, my constituents in Mississauga-Brampton South would pay, on average, about \$500 more a year under Bill 45. I cannot support it, and I will not support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I rise today to speak to Bill 45 from my colleague for Bramalea-Gore-Malton. I admire my colleague's commitment to his constituents. Auto insur-

ance is a big issue across Ontario but especially in the GTA. However, when I look at Bill 45, I can't help but think that we can do better in this Legislature.

This bill has been touted as restoring fairness to the auto insurance system, but I think in my colleague's haste to get a piece of legislation drafted, he's made some glaring oversights that render his bill fundamentally unfair.

Let's consider the factors that the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has mandated that insurance companies use. There's nothing out of the ordinary about the first three factors, which are, number of years without an accident, annual mileage driven and the insured driver's years of licensed driving experience.

What is really interesting, however, is that the fourth, most important factor that an insurance company must use, as laid out in this Bill 45, is the population of where the driver lives. Now, according to statistical studies, population is a very poor predictor of whether or not a claim will be made. In fact, statistically speaking, only 2.2% of a predicted loss cost can be attributed to population, and yet in my colleague's bill population must be, given his weighting schedule, the fourth-most-important factor. That is, the insurance companies must attribute the population factor a weight lower than the first three factors but greater than the pooled weight of a number of other factors. What this means is the other factors that are more indicative of a driver's record, like the number of traffic violations and convictions, must be considered less important than the population of where a person lives.

1550

So while the member's aim with this bill was to restore fairness and ensure that premiums only reflect the driver's record, he unfairly dismissed the factors that indicate whether an individual is a risky driver or not. Essentially, this means that a good driver anywhere in the province will see their rates increase in order to subsidize lower rates for a riskier driver. Even if certain areas in the GTA experience an overall decline in their rates—which, by the way, will come at the expense of other areas—good drivers will not receive the discount reflective of the driving record relative to risky drivers. In a bill that claims to restore fairness, this unequivocal and inevitable outcome is fundamentally unfair.

There are real issues playing in the auto insurance industry. The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton rightly quotes the Auditor General when he says that we have the highest auto insurance rates in Canada. However, that seems to be where the member's reliance on the Auditor General ends, because if one looks at Mr. McCarter's report—and remember, he is the official in the province that undertakes the most in-depth, non-partisan examination of Ontario's most pressing issues—nowhere does he cite geographical rating factors as a problem in Ontario's auto insurance. So to have Bill 45 make geographical rating considerations its primary focus is to divert people's attentions away from what the Auditor General outlined as the true issues. These include

high claims costs, which are primarily the result of fraud, and the structure of the statutory accident benefits. The Auditor General also noted the extreme backlog in the mediation and arbitration process. These are the issues that need to be addressed. Bill 45, unfortunately, diverts our attention away from attacking the real reasons for high rates in Ontario.

Finally, I know that my colleague, prior to this debate, sent around a list of amendments to address some of the oversights in his bill. This is indicative of the haste in which it was drafted. The process lacked adequate consultation. Despite the amendments proposed, we are starting with something that is fundamentally unfair and does not come close to addressing the real issues. It's merely sweeping it under the rug.

This summer, the PC Party will be going to town hall meetings throughout Ontario to hear what the people have to say about auto insurance before we craft regulations to fix auto insurance. To people in Brampton: We'll be there in July, and I hope you come out and share your views.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to take very long, because I want to cede that right to the author of the bill, and that's the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. My goodness, you would have thought that he had drafted a bill condoning child labour from the response here. And, my goodness, the incredible wrath with which the insurance industry has attacked him. Whoa; methinks they doth protest too much. Obviously he has hit a nerve here, and I think the nerve he has hit is exactly the one that should be hit, and that is on behalf of his constituents.

By the way, talking about town halls, he has already had them. He has consulted with people. Two hundred people show up because people have this problem and people want it redressed. That's why. There's absolutely no good reason and there is no fact behind why somebody living on one side of the street with exactly the same driving record should be charged way more than somebody living on the other side of the street. That's what the bill is about. There is nothing illogical about that. In fact, Mary Hardy, a professor of actuarial studies at the University of Waterloo, condones it. So, come on. You've got professors condoning it. You've got town halls full of people who need it. And guess what? Surprise, surprise: You've got insurance companies and those who speak for them here fighting it. I get it. It's pretty clear.

The member is also trying to be conciliatory. He has said to other members, "Let's take it to committee. Let's work on amendments. There is a problem here." There's obviously a problem here. Let's address the problem; committee is the place to do that. It's not a question of the hastiness of drafting the bill; it's a question of the member trying to open up a discussion and doing it in the best legislative forum possible.

Finally, all I'll say is: This is not anything new. British Columbia, Manitoba, California—other jurisdictions

have already acted on exactly what the member is putting forward. This is not anything new.

I don't understand the anger, I don't understand the rancour, I don't understand the hysteria with which the member has been targeted. I say, good on you. It's a very, very brave move. It's a very good thing when all of a sudden you've become the target of multinational corporations. I think that's a badge of honour in this place, quite frankly. So I say bravo to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. Way to go—up against the giants. Keep going.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. David Oraziatti: I'll be brief. I only have a few minutes left to comment on Bill 45. The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has introduced this bill.

Speaker, I think we'd all recognize that there are challenges in the insurance industry. The reality is, this is not the way to get at that.

The member opposite talks about a badge of honour. I don't think when MADD Canada is standing up saying that there's a problem at this, and the OPP is saying that there's a problem with this, that that's a badge of honour anybody in here wants to be wearing.

I think it's very clear that there's a number of problems with the bill. It is fraught with problems. It needs to be more well thought out.

No one would say consumer protection measures are not measures we should be taking. That's why we introduced legislation to protect consumers with respect to cellphones. There are ways to get at this. This is not the way.

Point number one: geography, eliminating the geographic rating factors: The impact on regions outside of the GTA is absolutely horrendous. People are outraged because in northwestern Ontario, rates would go up 38%; in northeastern Ontario, 30%; in Sarnia, 25%; in Ottawa, 27%. These are the rates that would be impacted by this bill moving forward. Those rates in other jurisdictions, in jurisdictions outside of the GTA, would be negatively impacted. That's problematic, I think, for many members of this Legislature and many MPPs. The idea is not to pit one region against another in this place; it's to find solutions that work for all Ontarians and all residents, and that's not what this does.

The driving safety record is also a problem. I think it's a problem when we use what is supposed to be an expert individual, Ms. Hardy, with respect to her letter, and a press release is sent out by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin that says the expert is commenting on and backing up Bill 45 when, quite clearly, the letter that was sent by Ms. Hardy says with respect to the "proposed amendments" to Bill 45, which nobody has seen. Those amendments have not been proposed in the Legislature. No one has seen them. It's top secret. They're not out there.

Ms. Hardy is commenting on something else. She's commenting on a very different bill, not Bill 45. It is intellectually dishonest to get out there and say that Ms. Hardy is supporting this legislation. If I was Ms. Hardy, I

would be furious that my information was used to support Bill 45, because it is not—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Unparliamentary language: "dishonest." I'd ask the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. David Oraziatti: Withdrawn, Speaker.

The comment that Ms. Hardy makes is clearly about a bill that has not been shown to the Legislature. It's not in debate right now. Bill 45, the original motion, is what's being debated, and I think that's a problem.

The other aspect of the bill is with respect to the driver's safety record. MADD Canada's Andrew Murie clearly talks about the issues around the driver's safety record: street racers, somebody running a red light, someone pulled over and stopped for impaired driving—as long as they didn't get in an accident. These are risky drivers that we do not want to see benefit from lower rates at the expense of other drivers. Somebody who might lose their licence because they are a riskier driver should be taken off the road. If they end up having a claim, what does that do to good drivers?

MADD Canada is very clearly opposed to this, and so is the OPP. The association president, Jim Christie, said that safe drivers subsidizing dangerous drivers is an outcome that the OPP Association cannot support.

I think, Speaker, it's very, very clear that the experts that have come forward, that have commented on Bill 45—not some imaginary version of Bill 45—oppose it. I'm urging all members to do that. It's not the right way. There are other solutions to reducing auto insurance, and we're working on those.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: All of us commend the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton with respect to recognizing, first, that the insurance industry is an important component of the cost of operating a vehicle, no question about it, and it has to be done fairly.

The industry itself does try to bring fairness to it. There's always going to be disputes, and I think having the government set the policy by doing consulting—but I want to make sure of a couple of things quickly. I want to recognize Tony Irwin, who is a member here—he's been a staff person here. He knows the business very well. And I want to recognize the work by the IBC and a letter that we all received from Ralph Palumbo. I think it outlines clearly some of the problems that we have with this particular bill.

My colleague has just spoken. I think the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, our critic on this file, has explained quite thoroughly our position on this. There is no perfect solution because it's a mandatory product legislated by the government and so it's a monopoly to the respect that the pricing of it—you have to have insurance. Now, there are lots of other fraud and other

stuff in the system. I'm going to let my colleagues share the rest of the time. Thank you.

1600

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm happy to rise today in opposition to Bill 45 as well. Let's get right to the facts: This bill is going to raise auto insurance rates across rural and northern Ontario.

I don't blame the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, however, for bringing it forward. He's a new member and he listened to his constituents. Obviously, it's a huge concern for constituents in his area, in his part of the province, and it's natural that those people would go to their MPP with their concern, and it makes sense that their MPP would want to act on those concerns. So I commend him for that.

Insurance, though, is about risk and it's about cost. Like many other financial services out there, if it costs the company more to insure drivers in a certain area, that's a function of there being higher fraud or accident benefit claims in that area. The risk is spread out over drivers in that area.

As the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton will know from sitting in on the auto insurance study that we did last week in our general government committee, you don't have to be complicit in a fraud scheme to be a victim of it or to have claims arising from that fraud scheme.

If I could just turn my attention to the current state of auto insurance rates in the province, I'd like to show why this is bad for constituents in Prince Edward-Hastings, where I'm from. And using numbers provided to me by the great folks at Mackay Insurance on Dundas Street, in beautiful Belleville, I'd like to tell the story of a 32-year-old married driver of a 2008 Dodge Caravan—a soccer dad or hockey dad.

In Bancroft it would cost him about \$1,200 a year—a little bit less in Belleville and maybe a little bit more in Prince Edward County. That same driver, if he had the same postal code as the constituency office for the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, would be paying \$2,700. It's \$1,500 a year more. The reason for that is because that's where the fraud is occurring. That's where the big benefit claims are. They're in that area. It's not a fault of the people who are there necessarily, but that's where the risk occurs.

So for the member to pretend that spreading the cost and spreading the risk over all of the province won't create higher rates in rural Ontario is a bit naive. I can't allow Bill 45 to pass on the backs of my constituents in Prince Edward-Hastings, so I'll be voting against Bill 45 today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, Mr. Speaker, I listened to some of the intellectual discussion here and I'm a little confused. I believe there's a lot of scare tactics going on here. The member from Sault Ste. Marie stated that he feels that his rates—and of course, the Liberals and

Conservatives have been spreading rumours up north that the rates will go up. Why will the rates go up? The rates are based on an area now. What's that got to do with the north when you're talking about the GTA? Is it because the companies won't make as much profit so they have to move the profit-making to somewhere else? Is that what he's saying? If that's the case, that's wrong.

You know, it's amazing how they come to these conclusions. Okay, we talked about MADD. It doesn't matter, a driver is going to drive. He gets his licence, he goes on the street. If he decides to do racing on the street, or he decides to drink and drive, we have laws that govern those kinds of things, and he'll be dealt with accordingly. I don't know why MADD would think that this is going to increase worse drivers because more people—anybody can get a licence until they're convicted. So if the guy is not convicted, why are the rates going to go up because some guy decides to run a red light or speed up? He's going to get nailed anyways, and if he doesn't get nailed, he would have done it anyways.

So that absolutely makes no sense at all. This is simply bolstering the insurance companies by the Liberals and the Conservatives because they're their buddies and they're going to help them out. It's the bottom line; it's about money and big bucks for companies at the expense of the people of Ontario. That's what it's about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I rise to speak to Bill 45, An Act to amend the Insurance Act. I want to thank the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton for bringing this bill forward so we can have an opportunity to have these discussions. But I, too, have concerns that have been brought to my attention on how this bill would impact auto insurance rates for northern Ontario drivers. As a result, I'm compelled to speak against this piece of legislation.

I do believe the member has good intentions bringing this bill forward. He's aiming to keep insurance companies from charging higher premiums to good drivers because of the neighbourhood in which they live. The goal is to make the auto insurance rates more equitable in larger southern Ontario centres, and I do understand that. I want to say it is a noble aim, but it cannot come at the expense of northern Ontarians.

It proposes a risk classification system based on four mandatory factors in decreasing order of priority: the record of the insured person where they're found to be at fault, the distance they drive annually, years of driving experience, and the population of the area where the driver primarily resides. It's that last factor that seems to be where the rubber leaves the road.

I have to rely on the analysis of experts in the industry, and I will cite a study done for the Insurance Bureau of Canada by J.S. Cheng and Partners just last month. The key conclusion includes the following: "The end result of Bill 45 would be to compel drivers in northern territories to subsidize drivers in high loss cost southern territories, and drivers with inexpensive vehicles to subsidize drivers with expensive vehicles. Furthermore, the cost of imple-

menting a new unproved rating system will increase the premiums of all drivers.”

In northern Ontario communities, driving isn’t a luxury; it’s a necessity. The only way to or from work or to a doctor in the next town or two towns over is by car. Further increases in the cost of driving for northerners may well be the straw that breaks the camel’s back for some of them. It could simply make living in the north unaffordable for them, and we can’t have that. I’m quite sure the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton would have seen this as an unintended consequence, would have looked at that in the legislation.

The bottom line for me is ensuring that any legislative change regarding auto insurance cannot cost northerners one more single penny than we’re paying now. Based on the evidence before me, I’m very concerned that Bill 45 will cost additional money for northerners. For that reason, I cannot support the legislation. I do believe it’s a mistake, Speaker, to impose a one-size-fits-all solution that makes sense in Toronto, but, according to the experts at the Insurance Bureau, makes no sense for northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I’m pleased to be able to respond to all the constructive criticism. I enjoy it. Bring it on. It’s part of the debate that happens here. I welcome it.

Let’s begin with, first, the honourable member from Nipissing. I greatly appreciate his remarks, in a very measured and very thoughtful manner, addressing the concerns, which are legitimate, about whether or not this will impact the north.

Let’s make it very clear. I started off by addressing the fact that there are 55 territories in Ontario. Ten of those territories are in the GTA. The bill does not mean that they would wipe out all the territories. Replacing the territories with a different definition, a statistical metropolitan area—what that would do is reduce the further subdivision. So the areas that are currently regional, like the GTA, like London, like the north, like Thunder Bay, would remain, but the further subdivision—in the letter that I did circulate widely, from Ms. Hardy, the professor, the term used is “granulization”—would be banned, so that in the GTA there wouldn’t be a difference from one street to another, but there would still be a difference between the GTA and Windsor or Windsor and the north. Those regions would still exist, but the further granulization or subdivision would no longer exist. That’s what the bill is about.

1610

To address my honourable colleague from Sault Ste. Marie, the amendments were very clearly indicated in the letter that was widely distributed regarding Ms. Hardy’s comments. In those comments, the nuts and bolts of the bill remain the same. There was a minor modification to the categories that were listed that all the members have spoken to, the at-fault claims, including convictions—that clarification was made. The car-make-and-model

clarification was made. Annual kilometres driven and years of driving experience were all maintained, and the statistical area of primary residence was also there.

The nuts and bolts were essentially the same. There was a minor modification. Ms. Hardy clearly indicates that we’re not banning the use of geography; we’re banning the subdivision of a riding. In California, this was a major issue. There were so many communities that were feeling the discriminatory practices of the insurance industry that were charging higher rates in regions that, consequently, very similar to Ontario, are the very same regions where there are low-to-medium income; there are more new Canadians—those are the community members that are being impacted by this and those are the community members that would benefit from more fairness.

In fact, the fairness issue is this: Why is it the case that, while claim rates and accident rates differ by only 33%, insurance premiums differ by 100%? That’s the issue, and that’s the issue we need to address.

The member from Mississauga–Brampton South had a lot to say about fraud. Let’s be very clear here: Any measures that reduce fraud are good measures, but if you reduce fraud there is no guarantee that that would reduce our premiums. That would benefit the insurance companies for certain, but where is the guarantee that if we reduce fraud, we would get a benefit from that?

A direct example, and I’ll cite this for the member from Mississauga–Brampton South, is the 2010 benefit reduction. In 2010, regulations were passed that cut the benefits that we receive as consumers here in Ontario by more than half. What we’ve seen is, we now have the second-worst coverage in all of Canada in terms of the benefits we receive when injured. We have the second-worst benefit coverage in the country but we still have the highest insurance premiums in the country. Despite the fact that our claim costs have gone down significantly and despite the fact that, in the previous year, insurance profits have gone up significantly, our insurance premiums have remained the same.

The member from Mississauga–Brampton South talks about the Liberal track record with respect to insurance. Let’s talk about this track record. In the previous six years, insurance rates have increased 26% under this Liberal government. That’s the track record the member from Mississauga–Brampton South wants to applaud as the track record for this government.

I’m open to suggestions. I’m open to improving this bill. But what I’m not open to is the mentality that puts insurance companies before people, that puts profits before the hard-earned dollars of citizens of this province, of this region of the GTA. Let’s start implementing bills and regulations and laws that put people first, because we see what happens when we implement the 2010 regulations: We increased the profits of corporations. Have we reduced the premiums for the consumer? No. Have we reduced our benefits? Significantly. But we haven’t made life more affordable.

Touching on fraud again, a number of people indicated that fraud is the driving factor. The Insurance

Bureau of Canada has indicated that claims costs are certainly the driving factor. But, with respect to fraud, the anti-fraud task force testified in committee hearings and indicated a couple of very startling conclusions; one, that they were not able to say conclusively where fraud was occurring. I was very concerned by this comment, because I've heard this fraud argument used to say that certain regions of the GTA have higher fraud and that's why their rates are higher. I asked point blank, "Can you determine, can you pinpoint, where fraud is occurring in the GTA?" The answer, conclusively, and I welcome everyone to check Hansard, was, "No. We can't pinpoint." In fact, I asked, "What types of fraud are there?" "Organized fraud, premeditated fraud, opportunistic fraud." "What are the statistics? How much is it costing? What is the rate of this?" "We don't know"—the anti-fraud task force doesn't know themselves how much fraud is occurring, what the total cost of fraud is in the province and where it's occurring. If they don't know where it's occurring, how can that be used against us?

Let's get back to the point here. We need to make auto insurance more fair here in this province, we need to make it more fair here in the GTA, and it's simply wrong to have a system that impacts your insurance premiums based on where you live. Ten kilometres, five kilometres, across the street does not change whether you're a good driver or bad driver. We know that 80% to 90% of people never make a claim in their life. Those innocent drivers are being had. Their rates are increasing for no reason, and that's why we need to address this issue. If there are amendments to be made, let's make them. If there is clarification that needs to be made, let's make that. But let's address the issue. Does anyone in this House disagree that it's wrong to charge rates differentially from one street to another in the same geographic area in the same city? That's simply unacceptable, and I hope you all agree with me.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You have two minutes.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: You've got two more minutes.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much. I'll continue.

The Auditor General made a number of comments and his comments were referred to. He addressed the fact that high claims costs is a serious issue. We've seen that the 2010 amendments have reduced our ability to make those claims, but we haven't seen yet the impact it will have on our premiums. We do know that the Auditor General said that fraud is 10% to 15% of the cost associated with claims in this province. Now, if they're only 10% to 15%, again, the argument of talking about fraud again and again is not substantiated in the numbers. It only impacts 10% to 15%, according to the Auditor General. He's an independent, non-partisan representative, and we respect his work.

It comes down to, again, the issue of fairness. Can anyone in this House say that it's right to charge more for a driver who has a clean record in Rexdale, in Brampton, in Brampton-Springdale, in Brampton West, in Mississauga-Brampton South? How will you face your constituents and tell them that we don't support the idea of

fairness within the same region? How are you going to look at them and say, "I voted down a bill that requires insurance companies to treat their insureds fairly?" How are you going to look at them and say, "You know what? I don't like the idea of giving you a fair deal. I like the idea of you having a higher rate versus your cousin that lives in Lawrence Park or that lives in Rosedale. That's a good idea?" How are you going to say that to your constituent?

You can't, because it's wrong. You can't say that, because it's wrong, and that's why you have to support this bill. Because if you don't, you're supporting the notion that there's some justification to increasing your rates by driving down the street, that there's some reason that you are a worse driver because you moved to Brampton, which is a beautiful city, and we shouldn't have that happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

ADDRESSING ONTARIO'S DEBT THROUGH ALTERNATIVES TO PUBLIC SECTOR LAYOFFS AND PROGRAM CUTS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT À S'ATTAQUER À LA DETTE DE L'ONTARIO SANS RECOURIR À DES MISES À PIED DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC ET À DES COMPRESSIONS DANS LES PROGRAMMES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal with ballot item number 46, standing in the name of Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Barrett has moved second reading of Bill 94. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll deal with the vote at the end of regular business.

LIQUOR LICENCE AMENDMENT ACT (SERVING LIQUOR IN CERTAIN PLACES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL (SERVICE D'ALCOOL DANS CERTAINS LIEUX)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Albanese has moved second reading of Bill 93. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

M^{me} France Gélinas: On division, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal with the vote at the end of regular business.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): So noted.

Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to committee—Ms. Albanese, you have a choice.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Justice policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested the bill be referred to justice policy. Agreed? So referred.

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(RISK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS
FOR AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES ASSURANCES
(SYSTÈMES DE CLASSEMENT DES
RISQUES
EN ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Singh has moved second reading of Bill 45. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will take this vote. Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1620 to 1625.

ADDRESSING ONTARIO'S DEBT
THROUGH ALTERNATIVES
TO PUBLIC SECTOR LAYOFFS
AND PROGRAM CUTS ACT, 2012
LOI DE 2012 VISANT À S'ATTAQUER
À LA DETTE DE L'ONTARIO
SANS RECOURIR À DES MISES À PIED
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC
ET À DES COMPRESSIONS
DANS LES PROGRAMMES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have all members in their seats?

Mr. Barrett has moved second reading of Bill 94.

All those in favour please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Fedeli, Victor
Jackson, Rod

Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Milligan, Rob E.

Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Walker, Bill

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France

Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir

Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Singh, Jagmeet
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 18; the nays are 49.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Please open up the doors.

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(RISK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS
FOR AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES ASSURANCES
(SYSTÈMES DE CLASSEMENT DES
RISQUES
EN ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Singh has moved second reading of Bill 45.

All those in favour please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Campbell, Sarah
DiNovo, Cheri
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France
Horwath, Andrea

Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Paul
Natyshak, Taras
Prue, Michael
Schein, Jonah

Singh, Jagmeet
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. It would be really nice if you guys would remain quiet during the vote because Mr. Singh actually missed his name being called by the Clerk when it was called first. I would ask that during a vote that you kind of keep your voices low.

All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike

Jackson, Rod
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Leone, Rob
MacCharles, Tracy
MacLaren, Jack
Mangat, Amrit
McDonnell, Jim

Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd

Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Fedeli, Victor
Hoskins, Eric

McKenna, Jane
McMeekin, Ted
McNaughton, Monte
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milligan, Rob E.
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia

Takhar, Harinder S.
Walker, Bill
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

Second reading negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1632.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 16; the nays are 52.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craiton, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
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Jane McKenna
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First Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 40^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 11 June 2012

Lundi 11 juin 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 11 June 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 11 juin 2012

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, j'aimerais présenter aujourd'hui ma filleule, ma nièce, Marie-Christine Chartrand et son amie Tiphaine Dereyen : my goddaughter, Marie-Christine Chartrand, and her friend Tiphaine DeReyen.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome Rachel Chertkoff, Alex Rotman and Danielle Arje from the Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee, or CJPAC. I'm pleased that they're here with us this morning to watch question period.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to introduce the parents of page Angela Feng—her mother, Julie Song, and her father, Alex Feng—and her grandmother, Wong Shu Lan. Please join me in welcoming them to the House today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests. Further introductions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: They're on their way here, but I would like to introduce to this House Mrs. Natalie Mehra, who is with the Ontario Health Coalition; Mr. Peter Clutterbuck, who is from the Social Planning Network of Ontario; as well as Adrienne Silnicki, from the Council of Canadians, and their supporters who came to see question period this morning.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to introduce and welcome my intern, Najva Amin, sitting in the members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Scarborough Southwest, in the public gallery we have Mohammad Quader, here to see his daughter, page Tameem Quader, in action. We welcome them to Queen's Park.

Last call for introductions.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Last call? I've heard that before.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You've been there?

SPEAKER'S WARRANT

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a copy of my warrant, issued in accordance with the adoption of the

House on June 7 of the report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts respecting testimony of Dr. Chris Mazza, which was delivered in person, on my order, by the Sergeant-at-Arms on June 8, 2012.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Premier: Premier, eight months ago, in the election, Ontario families sent us here with a very clear message. They want to see us focused on private sector job creation and reining in public spending to balance the books in our province.

The problem is, you didn't seem to get that message. After eight months, what should be up is down, and what should be down is up. The deficit is up, spending is up, taxes are up, and what should be up—jobs—are actually down in our province. Clearly, Premier, doesn't this indicate we're on the wrong path? Why didn't you get that message eight months ago?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question. Obviously, I take issue with my honourable colleague's perspective on this. The fact of the matter is that jobs overall are up. The trend is moving in the right direction. We have created 320,000 new jobs since the recession. March and April were particularly good: We created 70,000 new jobs. May was not as promising.

I think Ontarians understand that we are plugged into the global economy and that there is a tremendous amount of uncertainty. When bad things happen over there, there are in fact reverberations that are felt here. I know that Ontarians understand that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think the Premier used the expression, "The train is moving in the right direction." We're worried that when it enters the province of Ontario, it becomes derailed. It becomes derailed by higher taxes in this budget, by higher energy rates and just more and more red tape that has become this thicket that anybody has to hack through with a machete to try to get anything done in this province when they have the audacity to try create jobs.

Premier, the other provinces actually added 32,000 full-time jobs last month, despite international uncertainty. The provinces added 32,000 jobs, while our province actually lost 31,000 full-time jobs this past month.

Premier, isn't that an indication that you're on the wrong path and instead you should adopt our PC ideas

that are pro-jobs and pro-growth and will turn Ontario's economy around?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, my honourable colleague is always interested in comparing Ontario to the other provinces, and I think there's probably a little bit of merit in that, but not too much. The fact of the matter is that we each have our own different economic strengths, and our responsibility is to play to those strengths. If you have a resource-based economy, the fact of the matter is, there's a tremendous global demand for resources, and it makes it a little bit different for us as a province which still places a great deal of emphasis on manufacturing.

Having said that, Speaker, we know that one of the most important things that we can do to be competitive in the global economy is to invest in the skills and education of our people. That's why I'm so very concerned that my honourable colleague would eliminate our 30%-off tuition grant, which is going to give families a \$1,700 credit this year for university and an \$800 credit this year for college, which is exactly what they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It is amazing, Speaker, that every time we ask the Premier about private sector job creation and every time we ask about balancing the books, he comes up with new ideas for new spending in the province that we simply cannot afford.

The Premier says that sometimes we compare ourselves with other provinces. I think we should. In fact, Speaker, we should be number one, and the other nine behind us. That's my mission, and we won't stop until Ontario is number one in job creation again.

Premier, on Friday, we actually lost 31,000 full-time jobs. The other nine provinces added on 32,000 full-time jobs. You talked about the train moving in the right direction; Ontario has moved from being the engine of Confederation to the caboose. It's time for a change in direction, one focused like a laser on private sector job creation: our plan to make energy affordable; to lower taxes, not increase them; and to get our fiscal house in order. This is the path to prosperity in our province, Premier. Won't you accept the ideas we've put on the table?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No, Speaker. I appreciate the ideas, but I'll tell you why I can't accept them. My honourable colleague is proposing that they cut corporate taxes at this point in time when we can't afford to do so. Over the course of three years, that costs \$1.5 billion. They also want to go ahead and cut the business education tax. Over the course of three years, that's \$300 million. They want to maintain in place the racetrack subsidy. Over the course of three years, that's over \$1 billion. When you add those three measures together, they cost \$2.8 billion. My honourable colleague wants to spend \$2.8 billion in those areas.

He's going to have to take the money out of our schools and out of our health care, Speaker. We believe that at the same time that we take measures to grow our economy, we've got to protect our schools and we've got

to protect health care for Ontario families. I think that's a balanced approach.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier on jobs and the economy and the lack of any kind of response from the Premier on what has become a jobs crisis in this province: Again, Premier, we lost jobs last month while the rest of Canada gained.

Since the election eight months ago, we actually have lost private sector jobs, while we've increased the size and cost of government under this Premier by almost 300,000 positions. We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs and added 300,000 to the government payroll. It is simply not sustainable.

Only this Premier would argue that in the midst of a job crisis, when we're losing good full-time, good middle-class jobs—what's his solution? Increasing taxes on job creators, increasing taxes on innovators. It's the wrong approach, sir. We need one that says, "We'll get behind the private sector economy to grow again, that the train will be strong in the province of Ontario. We'll be number one in Confederation again, not at the back of the pack."

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, I think I should take the opportunity to come to the rescue of truth, which is becoming a big casualty here.

I want to say that since the recession, Ontario has created 320,000 new jobs, which is more than any other province. My honourable colleague says that we want to increase taxes. I'm not sure where he's coming from in that regard. We have cut corporate taxes several times. We've eliminated capital taxes. We have reduced small business taxes. We've eliminated tens of thousands of regulatory burdens. We've done a lot to ensure that our businesses are on a competitive floor with respect to the rest of the country and, indeed, in the global economy.

So I'd say to my honourable colleague, as he moves forward, he should keep in mind the reality of what we've done here in Ontario to support businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think the Premier would probably benefit from an injection of that reality that he talks so much about.

Two Fridays ago, we lost 2,000 good middle-class jobs at GM. The Equinox and the Impala, which had been made in Ontario, now will shift production across the border to the States—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —31,000 full-time jobs in our province. The middle class, that has been the source of security and the strength of our province, is becoming hollowed out. Their incomes are falling behind inflation.

Clearly, Speaker, we need a change of course that says it does count where Ontario ranks among the provinces. We should be number one, the best place in this entire

country, to find a good job, to start a business, to see it grow. All the Premier does, in the face of the job losses: another panel, another study; he kicks the can down the road.

We say, kick that can no more. Get down to work. Create jobs with a bold plan to grow our economy and get the private sector moving again.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If only rhetoric could do it all for us, Speaker.

The good news is, in many ways, that Ontarians understand the global economy. They understand there's a lot of uncertainty out there; they understand that has a consequence on us in here. They understand that while we can't guarantee our children jobs for life, they also understand that those jobs that are hardest for us to lose are those jobs requiring the highest levels of skills and education, which is why we're moving ahead with our 30%-off tuition grant. This year, this September, it means a \$1,700 credit for families sending a child to university and \$800 for a student who's going to college.

I say to my honourable colleague, there really are no simple answers, but we know one thing for sure: You can never go wrong by investing in skills and education, investing in our families.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier seems to imply that those who worked at GM and lost their jobs, those who worked at Caterpillar and lost their jobs, those who worked at Xstrata in Timmins who lost their jobs, those who worked at—

Mr. John Yakubuski: Timken.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—Timken and lost their jobs, the list goes on and on—his question seems to imply that they weren't skilled workers. They are highly skilled workers—and the types of jobs that built our province, that made our middle class secure and the engine of consumption, not just for Ontario but for Canada. The Premier seems to shrug them off and dismiss them.

Premier, a dose of reality has hit those families real hard. And that's just the start of the 300,000 jobs we've lost in manufacturing, the 30,000 jobs last month. The Premier says this is mere rhetoric.

These are bold ideas that have made Ontario strong in the past—tried and true Conservative ideals that will turn our province around and make Canada strong at the same time. Sir, put that rhetoric into action, and I promise you, Ontario will lead Canada again. We'll do it. Why won't you?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Did we convince you yet?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Not there yet, Speaker. I give my honourable colleague credit for trying, but I have yet to be convinced, and I think, more importantly, Ontarians have yet to be convinced.

Again, Speaker, since the recession we've created some 320,000 new jobs, more than any other province.

I remind my honourable colleague, when it came to putting in place a difficult and challenging political and economic measure, adopting the HST, my honourable colleague stood against that. That was something that business demanded that we put in place in Ontario. When the auto sector said, "You've got to lend us a hand. There are 400,000 jobs at stake. Work with the federal government, work with the Obama administration. Come to the support of the auto sector," my honourable colleague opposite said no to that.

Business knows that when push comes to shove, we are in their corner, but we do it in a balanced way that also protects our schools and protects our health care for our families.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Half a decade ago, the government established a new system for Ontario's air ambulance system. At the time, this was a stand-alone private company. Ornge would be freed from government oversight, as was said, and provide better service at less cost. Does the Premier think the public got good value for its money from Ornge?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I think everyone in this House knows there were some challenges at Ornge. That is why we have changed the structure and strengthened oversight. One missing piece is, of course, Bill 50, which is before this House and that I'm hoping will be supported by the members opposite.

Ornge transports close to 20,000 patients every year. They do an extraordinary job getting people to the care they need. Just yesterday there were 37 patients transferred by Ornge; there were 30 inter-facility transfers, four by land; seven pediatric patients were transported. This is about getting people to the care they need as quickly as possible.

While we know there are things that need to change at Ornge, they are changing, and I'm very proud of the progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: People who watched as well-connected insiders wasted millions of dollars at Ornge are worried about this government's plans. Under the 300-page omnibus bill, the government will, and I'm quoting here Ontario's Ombudsman, "smooth the way for the government to further relieve itself of service administration through a variety of means, including designating delegated administrative authorities, and entering other delegation arrangements." The Ombudsman goes on to note, "One has only to think of the raging Ornge scandal to grasp that private players administering public services do not always share or respect public sector values."

Has the government not learned anything from the mess at Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government is looking at a variety of methods to get better value for our dollar to ensure that services are better delivered. The member opposite overlooked the fact that air ambulance services used to be privately delivered in Ontario. We've had some challenges that the Minister of Health has moved to correct.

We will continue to find better value for Ontarians across a range of services. Teranet is a good example of a very successful venture in that way.

It is about getting back to balance, and our commitment is to invest in health care and education. Those are this government's priorities as we deal with the question of better taxpayer value for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: In October, Ontarians elected a minority government to work together to tackle their challenges. More decisions in secret, less accountability, and new eHealts and Ornges are not what they had in mind. Is the government ready to heed the advice of independent legislative officers like Ontario's Ombudsman and amend their 300-page omnibus bill to ensure that the public is protected from another Ornge debacle?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In the case of ServiceOntario, I think two thirds of its services are already privately delivered, and they're well delivered privately. The member opposite neglects to share with the House that there is a substantial investment needed in new technology: new computers, new systems of delivering traditional government services. Frankly, given our priorities in health and education, rather than spend that money on computers for ServiceOntario we prefer to invest in health and education as we invite the private sector to deliver the last one third of those services.

It is about priorities. This government will continue to have education and health care as its focus. We will continue to look at value for taxpayers. As we do that, we will look at alternative service delivery models.

1050

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Finance. We all know that Ontario families pay the highest auto insurance in the country, but what we don't know is—in 2010 the government promised reforms to make auto insurance more affordable. The rates keep rising instead. Can the minister tell us where all the savings went?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite neglected to mention in his question that in the first quarter of this year, auto insurance rates declined—again, Mr. Speaker. I know he didn't say that. He neglected to say that the rate of increase in auto insurance premiums,

under this government, is much lower than the previous government's and much lower than the government before that.

There is always more to do, Mr. Speaker. We have our task force on fraud. We are looking forward to getting their report back so that we can better manage all insurance costs. There's always more to do. Our record speaks for itself. Rates have come down—or grown, excuse me, at a lower rate than inflation, and certainly much lower than they did under previous governments of all political stripes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, what the minister fails to acknowledge is that, over the past nine years of Liberal rule, insurance rates have gone up by 26%. In fact, the reduction that the minister is talking about was 0.18%—not even 0.2% of a reduction.

A document obtained from FSCO, the government agency that regulates auto insurance, has some startling news. In 2010, it cost the insurance industry \$765 per vehicle to cover the cost of accident benefits. But after the government's dramatic statutory accident benefit cuts, costs fell dramatically to \$300 per vehicle.

The costs of doing business went down, but the product keeps increasing in terms of its cost. Can the minister explain why drivers are paying more than ever and how that's a success story?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, the rate of increase in insurance has been the lowest under any government. The member opposite and the NDP have brought forward a plan. They want to emulate California, Mr. Speaker. They want to have the highest insurance premiums, on average, in North America. They want people in northern Ontario with good driving records to subsidize people in the greater Toronto area who have bad driving records. They don't want to listen to Mothers Against Drunk Drivers. They don't want to listen to the Ontario Provincial Police Association. They don't want to listen to a variety of other stakeholders that have rejected their sky-high auto insurance bill, which will leave families right across the province paying more while you subsidize people whose driving records are bad. We simply don't agree.

Our record speaks for itself, and we're going to continue to work to keep auto insurance premiums down for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I agree with the Minister of Finance. The Liberal government's record speaks for itself: the highest auto insurance rates in the country and an increase of 26% while they were in rule. The record speaks for itself.

Insurance firms making record profits have seen their medical costs go down by 50%, but drivers' rates are still going up, year after year. Is the minister ready to admit that his reforms have been a bust and work with us to make a real plan to make driving insurance more affordable here in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The NDP's sky-high auto premiums for Ontario bill won't work. It is about good drivers with good driving records subsidizing bad drivers with bad driving records. Don't take my word for it. Listen to the people that came to your committee: Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, the Ontario Provincial Police Association.

All the members in northern Ontario in the NDP caucus should speak up for their constituents and say no to your plan to drive northern Ontario insurance rates up by 30% to 34%. They will drive insurance premiums up in southwestern Ontario and in eastern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, Ontarians recognize that this plan that we've laid out has kept the rate of growth in premiums lower than most other jurisdictions and that we have a better public safety record, and they reject your plan to raise—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. It's apparent that the rot is just as deep at the executive offices of the Ministry of Health as it was at Ornge.

We have it on good authority that just days ago, the director of the emergency health services branch wanted to issue two director's orders against Ornge for its continued non-compliance with safety standards: one for violations of documentation standards, and the second for recurring incidences of single-staffing medics that put patients at risk. Assistant Deputy Minister Patricia Li ordered the emergency health services branch not to issue those orders.

What possible explanation does the minister have for a senior ministry official to direct the director of the emergency health services branch not to issue orders against Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite is notorious for his lack of credibility. He drops particular half-truths—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I had said before we left for the weekend last weekend that I was concerned about some of the accusations that are being thrown to each member personally. I would like you to keep that in mind.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that the emergency health services branch is providing very strong oversight at Ornge. Our new performance agreement at Ornge, in fact, is working. Those changes were necessary changes, they were recommended by the Auditor General, and we are implementing every one of the Auditor General's recommendations.

In addition, we do have legislation before this House that I would very much like to see passed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Minister, we have it on very good authority that the director of the emergency health services branch wrote those two orders and wanted to issue them against Ornge. The director had an express direction from the assistant deputy minister not to issue those orders against Ornge.

The minister can speak as much as she wants to about my lack of credibility. I would like to hear from the minister: Does she even know about this? If not, what does that say about her competence and her credibility?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Stop the clock, please.

My comments were based on individuals that I've been hearing inside of heckling and also in questioning. I continue to say two wrongs do not make a right. Please keep your comments at a professional level about the issue. It would be very helpful in this House.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, it has become very clear that good news at Ornge is bad news for the member from Newmarket–Aurora, so we've got some very good news at Ornge. We've got 10 more paramedics working than we did a year ago. We've got a virtually full-time complement, 98%, of the fixed-wing pilots. By July we'll be at 95% of helicopter pilots. These are issues the member has raised; these are issues that have been addressed.

Speaker, we continue to strengthen the leadership. Bruce Farr—I know the member from Newmarket–Aurora questions his credentials, but he has very strong credentials. Robert Giguere: special adviser on aviation, a long history in aviation, worked as a pilot, senior executive positions at Air Canada; he's an independent aviation consultant. We've also added Wayne Howard as vice-president of finance.

Things are moving forward at Ornge and I'm very, very pleased with the progress they're making.

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

This weekend, the health minister's family health team model was in the news, with allegations that the ministry is allowing unspent funds to remain with the organizations rather than recoup those funds, as would usually be the case. It was also in the news because whistleblowers had alerted her ministry of problems and then they were let go, with no intervention from her ministry.

1100

Can the minister explain why her government is so eager to introduce new ideas but so unwilling to provide the oversight necessary to make sure that it is working properly and using its funds properly?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we are very, very pleased and excited, in fact, about the family health teams that are now operating right across this province:

200 family health teams that are serving 2.8 million Ontarians. Over 600,000 of those people did not have a family doctor before the institution of family health teams.

We do take our oversight responsibilities extremely seriously, though. That's why every family health team does have someone in the ministry who reviews, line by line, their expenditures and does that reconciliation. Since 2005-06, we have recovered \$121 million of unspent funds from family health teams. Indeed, we do have a process in place—and the member opposite is aware of this—where we do conduct audits. I'll speak more to that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Right now, Ontarians are little bit leery, and they're getting sick and tired of a government that is all too willing to shell out hundreds of millions of dollars for health care services but does not seem to bother to properly monitor or to properly oversee, which we all know is a core function of the government—oversight. Yet today, it doesn't seem like it is being done.

Can the minister assure Ontarians that her family health team model is not yet another idea turned sour because the government did not bother to follow the money to demand accountability?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know that the member opposite is very familiar with the success of family health teams. Tens of thousands of people in her own riding are benefiting from family health teams.

Do we have important responsibilities for oversight? Absolutely. We take that very seriously. Indeed, the Mel Lloyd family health team in Shelburne has been subject to a ministry audit because concerns were raised by the community, and we have acted on those concerns.

This is an important part of moving forward with the transformation of health care. We need to focus on wellness. We need to get people the care they need before they get so sick that they have to go to hospital. Family health teams are a wonderful addition to health care in this province.

EDUCATION

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My question this morning is for the Minister of Education.

Minister, we all know that schools suffered in Ontario under the last government. The good news is under our government, we opened 500 schools and we hired 13,000 teachers. The PC Party closed 400 schools; 15,000 teacher jobs were lost.

In the last eight years, we have brought the graduation rate up by 14% in this province. I have seen these results in my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East: at Dunbarton High School, St. Mary's collegiate and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Under the last government, only 68% of graduates were getting through high school.

Will the minister tell this House about programs that help more students in Ontario graduate?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member from Pickering–Scarborough East for her advocacy for her community when it comes to education.

This morning, the Premier and I had a chance to visit Weston Collegiate with the member from York South–Weston. There, we had a chance to speak directly with our Ontario high school students, many of whom are benefiting from a new and ever-expanding program called the specialist high-skills major program. Six years ago, that program had only 500 students in it. Next year, we will have 38,000 students who benefit from that.

In September, there will be more than 1,500 specialist high-skills major programs in 670 high schools across Ontario, an increase from 1,300 programs this year. What that program does is it gives students the ability to acquire a specialized, career-focused education, it gives them a chance to get specially recognized certification and training, and opens the doors for them to see what career path they might want in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thanks to the minister for her answer. Last week, CBC News reported on the success of this very program at Lester B. Pearson high school. The high school students will be graduating this year, many with the specialist high-skills major in health care.

I'd like to quote the report from CBC: "Experience in health care and a competitive edge in post-secondary school education is what these 27 students" at Lester B. Pearson "have gained through their specialist program."

Minister, I know how important education is to my constituents in Pickering–Scarborough East and everyone in Ontario, and I look forward to attending some graduation ceremonies this month at my local high schools. Speaker, through you to the minister, what else are we doing to help Ontario students graduate?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Innovation in education and listening to our students about what they need to succeed is what's helping us ensure that more students will graduate.

I'm so proud that we now have 93,000 more students who have graduated. That really puts those students on a much better career path and much better life trajectory for the future.

Specialist high-skills major programs, like other programs such as expanded co-op credits, the dual credit program—all of those programs are helping students get the experience that they need so that they can be successful in school, so that they can ensure that they find a pathway for their future. That's why we're so focused, Speaker, on ensuring that we continue to put significant investments in our schools, we continue to innovate, and we continue to put Ontario students first.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Minister of Health. Does this sound familiar: "Hos-

pital Loses Faith in Ornge"? Well, it should sound familiar because it's a Windsor Star headline to an article where the Windsor Regional Hospital CEO says, "Things have not changed at Ornge. Whatever cultural issues are going on in that organization, things have not changed."

The minister has stood in her place saying she has fixed the problems at Ornge, but it's undeniable: The minister and the McGuinty government have failed. But they no longer need to take our word for it. The question is, will they now take the word of a hospital CEO right in the backyard of Dwight Duncan?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A reminder for the member: We refer to all members by their riding or their title. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, if the member opposite is genuine in his wish to improve care at Ornge, he would stop blocking Bill 50 and get that legislation passed. I do not understand why the party opposite continues to raise concerns but refuses to be part of the solution. We are making important progress at Ornge, there is no question about that, but we do need to get Bill 50 passed to ensure that there is oversight by legislation of Ornge. As I say, it is unconscionable, frankly, that they can complain but they refuse to be part of the solution; in fact, they block the solution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I honestly don't know how this minister sleeps at night.

Again, to the minister: We now know of yet another situation under your so-called new leadership. In April, Ornge dispatched a crew to Windsor Regional Hospital for a critical patient but didn't send enough paramedics. Disgusted and frantic at the incompetence, the CEO of the hospital paid \$500 cash out of his own pocket to pay for a taxi to send a nurse along with the air ambulance to fill in for the lack of paramedics. Is this her idea of cleaning up the mess at Ornge?

The Windsor Star now says, "The Ornge ambulance crisis has become a full-blown scandal, and the Liberal government can no longer deny it."

Minister, with a full-blown scandal under your leadership, why don't you do us all a favour, including Dwight Duncan, and resign immediately?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Stop the clock. The first time was a warning. The second time was defiance.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There is significant improvement happening at Ornge. Are we all the way there yet? No, we are not. But we've added significantly to the strength of the Ornge team by adding—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew is warned.

Stop the clock. I also have another point to make. I find it interesting that more and more members are taking to using their earpieces to hear. That is not a good sign.

1110

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't need any other comment when I'm standing.

Please finish, Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, yes, we've got very good news at Ornge. I know that good news at Ornge is bad news for the opposition, but it's good news for the people of Ontario. We've got 10 more paramedics working. We've got more pilots working. We've got new senior management on board. We know the member opposite is opposed to the Ontario southwestern economic development fund; he has voted against that. Is he also opposed to Bill 50? I'm going to ask him, if you really want to be part of the solution, let's work together. Why don't you take on the job in your caucus of getting your caucus supporting Bill 50?

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question, again, is to the Premier. Today I will be reintroducing my bill to ban owners and managers from taking their employees' hard-earned tips. This problem was growing in 2010 when the bill was first introduced and when it passed second reading, but for thousands of servers this unfair practice continues, in some cases costing them more than ever before. Speaker, does the Premier agree that tips should go to the hard-working bartenders, servers and dishwashers across Ontario and not to their bosses?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for the question. I know he has been a champion on this issue for a long time. We know that waiters and waitresses and bartenders across Ontario are the front line of a successful hospitality sector in Ontario, and we know that these young men and women often do a great job and work very hard to earn a decent living. At many establishments, servers share some of their tips with the bussers and the hosts and other service support staff. Those tip-sharing agreements are up to the management of each establishment.

The service sector is very competitive and the managers and the owners understand that their success depends on a service staff that is competent, caring and suitably compensated. We're certainly aware that the tip-out issue is a contentious issue within the hospitality industry, and we welcome the debate on the topic.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: I think the honourable minister is mistaking tip-outs for tip-sharing, and there is a fundamental difference between them. Most people don't even know that when they leave a tip, the owners of some restaurants and bars take a cut. Some owners take it all. But now we have a chance in this minority Parliament to see to it that restaurant and bar owners and managers be banned from taking their employees' tip money. We have a chance to finally give those workers the protection they so deserve. Will the government support my efforts to

make sure all of the tips go to the people they are meant for, the hard-working employees?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Again, I thank the member for his advocacy on this issue and I look forward to his introducing this bill. If any service staff have labour-related issues or feel that they're being treated unfairly by their employer, I would encourage them to call the Ministry of Labour's employment standards office for assistance. We care deeply about the workers and we want to ensure that employee rights are protected under the Employment Standards Act, because we understand how important these men and women are to our hospitality sector across Ontario. We know that they're the front line of that industry and it's an important economic development opportunity for Ontario, so I look forward to discussing the issue and I thank the member for his advocacy on this issue.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jeff Leal: My tough and thorough question this morning is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, last week you announced the creation of a panel to consult with the horse racing industry and that transition at the end of the slots-at-racetracks program. This is of great interest to the horse people in my riding who I met this past weekend. I've spoken to many of them since the announcement of the end of the slots-at-racetracks program, and I know that you've been speaking with horse people right across this great province. Mr. Speaker, could the minister please inform this House of the members and the mandate of this panel?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Peterborough, an unabashed advocate of moving forward with consultations to help the horse racing industry transition from the slots-at-racetracks program to a more sustainable, self-sufficient model.

The consultations are being led by a panel of three former cabinet ministers: former NDP Minister of Agriculture Elmer Buchanan, former Progressive Conservative Minister John Snobelen, and my former colleague John Wilkinson. The panel will work with the industry to develop a vision for the horse racing future, provide recommendations to the government on how to allocate transition funding, and advise on the modernization of other industry revenue sources to assist the industry in becoming self-sufficient. I look forward to the report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the minister for that detailed answer.

The members of the panel and its mandate have been subject to much discussion amongst the horse racing industry since last week's announcement. Having received \$3.7 billion through the slots-at-racetracks program through the OLG since 1998, the industry will have to engage with the panel on a new business model that is self-sustaining, moving forward.

I have spoken to many people at Kawartha Downs in my riding who believe that there is a positive future for

this industry, and they want us to sit down with the industry and get a positive plan going forward. Could the minister please elaborate on the transition program for the industry announced with this panel?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: First, I want to say that I know the horse racing industry will survive, but I'd also like to see it thrive. Program decisions will be made based on the recommendations of the panel, and we need to let them do their work. Many people in the horse racing industry want to work to help shape the future of that industry. They will be an important part of the process.

We know that the slots-at-racetracks program is ending at the end of next year. The future for the industry is one that doesn't rely on government support. So we've asked the panel to work with the industry and to advise us how to get there.

Speaker, I'm not going to prejudge what they come in with, but I do know that if you want to predict your future, you've got to be about creating it.

WOMEN'S SHELTER

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. I need, and so does our city, your urgent action by Thursday. That's when the board of directors at Nelson House is expected to shut down the women's shelter for good. This move has already displaced 15 at-risk women and their children with few crisis supports, with the exception of Ontario Works. Sadly, we know that a split second can mean the difference for those women and their children.

These 15 beds are part of a larger problem in Ottawa. In 2009, it was found that over 3,000 women were turned away from crisis shelters in our city. That's basically one in every six women. At Nelson House, it was far higher—one in every 11.

The chair of Nelson House has cited a government risk assessment that said the agency was at high risk. Premier, did your government commission the study? Have you or any of your ministers seen it, and will you commit to reviewing it today before it's too late and those beds are closed for good?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I think all members are concerned with the potential permanent closure of Nelson House. Just to bring members up to speed, as the member alluded to, there has been a temporary closure of the facility. I want to assure her, and assure all members, that the ministry has worked to make sure all residents at Nelson House have been transitioned to safe accommodations. The crisis line which has been operated by Nelson House has been transferred to ensure that women in crisis are supported.

The executive committee membership is meeting on June 14 to consider the board's recommendations to close permanently. This is an independent institution that has that authority. MCSS officials will attend this meeting to address the ministry's expectations and requirements regarding the risks they identify over the shelter's

governance and management problems. Obviously, based on the decision that the board makes, we will work very closely to address the results.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier: There's no question that community and social services has a major stake in the game. So do virtually several other government departments.

1120

One of the problems with what's happening at Nelson House is the mixed messages coming from the chair and effectively repeated today. Speculation is running rampant because the chair has cited a government risk assessment study. She has said repeatedly that the financial situation was becoming "more desperate by the month," and she cited lack of managerial support.

The truth is, the management board at Nelson House hasn't been forthcoming, and it will have ripple effects throughout our entire community. Without transparency, the public simply doesn't know what's wrong so that we can help.

Will you commit today, Premier, to intervene so our community can get those 15 crisis beds for women and children up and running today?

Hon. John Milloy: I know the member would never want to leave the impression—Nelson House is an independent body which contracts with the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The decision that they will reach on the 14th, this Thursday, is based on discussions they're going to have internally.

I want to reiterate that if they do decide on Thursday to wind down their operations, MCSS will continue to work with the community at large to make sure that the transition, those 15 beds that would be closed down—that the community will have the capacity to deal with women who are in crisis.

As I said in my earlier answer, we have worked to make sure that the 15 women who were there have been dealt with in the community, and we're going to continue to work with Nelson House and the community at large.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, the Premier said today that instead of moving forward with my bill to give condo owners more protection, he's conducting a condo review, which, according to rumours, may drag on for 18 months. Condo owners don't want to wait two more years for better protections. Why is the Premier stalling on badly needed changes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: It's my pleasure to respond to the concern that the member raised. It's a very important question for us, because we know that in Ontario, 525,000 condominium units are in the province, and the rate is growing very rapidly.

The condominium market in Ontario has changed dramatically since the Condominium Act came into force

over a decade ago. We are in fact taking steps to modernize the condominium market here and the act. This review that we're doing will directly engage the entire condominium community—owners, residents, developers and property managers—to identify a comprehensive set of issues and bring long-term solutions to the ever-changing market.

We will continue to work with all the consumers in the province of Ontario to ensure that we get this right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The minister is telling us things that I have been telling you for four years. This condo bill has not been updated for 15 years. I've been saying that for four years. We know that there are over 1.3 million condo owners.

I want to say to the Premier, you're looking for my advice, so here it is. Let's not draw this out for years. Condo owners have been telling me for five years they need licensed property managers, a quick and affordable way to resolve disputes, and better protections against shoddy construction. Is the Premier ready to move ahead with my proposed update of condo rules, or is he going to wait two more long years?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank the honourable member for his good intentions. Certainly, we want to work in collaboration with the members, Mr. Speaker. We will consider the proposals that he has made and how they will affect condominium owners and other stakeholders.

It is important for us to ensure that we get it right. This is an ever-changing marketplace. We want to make sure that when we get to the end of this with the review, we will have the right bill and we will ensure that the consumers are protected. We are looking at consumer protection for buyers, condominium finances, reserve fund management, condominium boards of governance; we're looking at the expertise and accreditation of condominium managers, at dispute resolution.

This is a very important engagement process. We want to ensure that this Condominium Act—which, by the way, has been in place for approximately 11 years, not 15 years—is going to be the right act when we get to the end of this.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I also want to thank Premier McGuinty and Finance Minister Duncan for their support and assistance with Friday's \$16-million announcement in Thunder Bay for flood relief for my communities of Conmee, Oliver Paipoonge and the city of Thunder Bay.

In spite of this great news, there are still those that are trying to convey an impression somehow that our government was slow in responding. Either they don't understand the process or they're pretending that they don't understand the process. In fact, Speaker, it's quite the opposite. Our turnaround time on response to this

flooding crisis in three communities in my riding was incredibly quick, and it's primarily a function of information that's required back from the three affected municipalities.

Can the minister please explain to the people in my riding the process for declaring a disaster area and the timelines associated with the announcement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Thunder Bay–Superior North for their advocacy for the community. I want to also thank everybody on the ground—all the emergency services, municipal officials, community organizations and local volunteers—for all of their hard work in Thunder Bay, Conmee and Oliver Paipoonge, the three affected communities.

When we received the resolution from Thunder Bay city council asking the province to declare the city a disaster area, we then worked with the municipalities to get assessments in place and have people on the ground to gather the information necessary. We got that information last Thursday. On Friday—so, 24 hours later—I was happy to visit Thunder Bay with both Bill Mauro and Michael Gravelle to inform the community that we'd be able to commit up to \$16 million to help Thunder Bay, Conmee and Oliver Paipoonge to get back on the ground. The volunteers like Michelle Likun on Spofford Street and 87-year-old Helen, who came out to speak to me—all of those people have been involved in getting the community back on its feet.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, thank you for the response. You're right: The residents appreciate the efforts of the responders, ministry officials, the voluntary orgs and everybody who has helped to deal with this challenge.

While the residents are very appreciative of the \$16 million that we've put forward to reduce the burden significantly on the taxpayers of Thunder Bay, there are still some questions that remain on what is considered to be one of the biggest floods in Ontario's history.

My question is: Does the federal government have a role in helping the people in Thunder Bay, in Conmee and in Oliver Paipoonge? Can the minister please explain if there's any possibility that the federal government once in a while will show up in Thunder Bay and provide some assistance to my communities in Thunder Bay, Conmee and Oliver Paipoonge?

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, from the noise on the other side of the House, you would think that this was a party opposite that doesn't believe that government levels should work together. We actually believe that governments should work together.

The up to \$16 million that we are talking about is from ODRAP, which is Ontario disaster relief. But what is also in place is that there's federal government disaster financial assistance. There are strict criteria that have to be reached, that have to be met.

What would have to happen is, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing would have to apply for

funding on behalf of the province. For the province to become eligible, Ontario—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's enough. Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Ontario would have to spend \$1 per capita. That means that, based on—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not appreciative of the member from Dufferin–Caledon, as soon as I sit down—actually, I wasn't even quite sat in my seat, to start.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no. This is not the moment to try to challenge me to do anything else, but to focus on what I'm talking about.

Minister.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's a bit bizarre that the party opposite wouldn't want to hear what other assistance Thunder Bay, Conmee and Oliver Paipoonge could get.

Based on 2011 population data, that would mean Ontario would have to invest \$13.3 million in recovery efforts and then we could apply for federal funding on behalf of Thunder Bay and the surrounding areas. So we're going to be paying attention and we're going to monitor the situation closely because we think we should apply if there's that possibility, and I think the party opposite should agree with that.

1130

JOB CREATION

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Premier. Premier, last month, Ontario lost 31,000 full-time jobs, and May was the 65th consecutive month that Ontario has lagged Canada in job creation. The Premier has failed to take action on Ontario's jobs crisis and instead struck yet another panel to talk about it.

Last Friday, the Premier announced that CAW economist Jim Stanford would be sitting on this panel—the same Jim Stanford who has a chapter in his book entitled “Replacing Capitalism?” Will this Premier explain why he has made Jim Stanford his jobs adviser?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I think Jim Stanford is a great Canadian who has a lot to offer this country. I may not agree with him, but you know what? Stop trashing good citizens of this province and country who dedicate and volunteer their service. I'm proud that John Snobelen is helping us with the horse racing industry. I'm proud that Jake Epp is the chair of Ontario Power Generation.

You know what? Instead of that negative attacking of Ontarians, vote for the southwest Ontario economic development fund today. Let's work together to create jobs. Let's stop name-calling and let's stop demonizing the people who we don't agree with. Let's work together for a better future for all Ontarians. Doing that will pass the

southwest economic development fund. Thank God people like Jim have stood up in support of that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier: If you want to stop trashing Ontarians, stop trashing the doctors. Stop trashing the Ontario horse racing industry. Stop trashing Ontario breeders.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals clearly have no plan to tackle Ontario's jobs crisis. They brought in CAW economist Jim Stanford to advise on jobs—a man, in his book, who condemns “the continuing, scandalous failure of capitalism.” Does this Premier accept Jim Stanford's position on capitalism? If not, why has the Premier brought in Jim Stanford as a jobs adviser?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member's constituents who work for and in the auto sector ought to be listening very carefully.

Mr. Speaker, it is about respect. We all work together in this province. Our jobs and growth council is composed of people from all walks of life. We have the head of a bank; a union economist; we have a number of people from the manufacturing sector. These are all people who want to give back to their province and their country. We think that's important. In fact—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. That's been said twice, and the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound will withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you stand and withdraw.

Mr. Bill Walker: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: These people are all volunteering.

I'd like to thank John Tory, the former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, for working with us on Ontario Place.

Mr. Speaker, we can all work together. That kind of attitude sets Ontario back. We're prepared to work with all Ontarians for a better future for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm going to ask that security clear that now.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On this side, as well.

The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I always get screwed on question 6. Speaker, my question is to the health minister. Mike Pidberzny is a constituent of mine, a father, a husband, a Hamilton police officer for 29 years. Mike was diagnosed

with kidney cancer in January of this year. His team of experts at the renowned Juravinski Cancer Centre have recommended interleukin 2 as the only effective means of treatment for a sustainable remission. Mike has been told he is an ideal candidate for this treatment. Unfortunately, this treatment is no longer available in Ontario, even though it continues to be funded in other provinces. Mike has applied for out-of-province coverage, but the ministry is unwilling to foot the bill.

Speaker, why is this government denying patients in Ontario access to treatments that doctors and other provinces continue to endorse? Minister, will you help Mike?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite knows that these decisions are made by independent experts who are extremely knowledgeable about health care, about drugs, about what is available in Ontario and about what is not available in Ontario.

I'm very proud of the coverage that we do offer. We're always looking at ways to make it better. I think the member opposite knows that we are absolutely committed to doing what's right for Ontario patients.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. Therefore, this House sits recessed until this afternoon at 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm here to introduce some of our friendly members of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario. We have Dave Elliott, who's also president of Elliott Insurance; Arthur Lofsky, who's in charge of government relations from the Insurance Brokers Association; we've got John McClelland, who's also with the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario; and a very special person, a good friend of mine who is the president-elect of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario, Debbie Thompson. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests to the House. Further introduction of guests?

There being no further introductions, it is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROSY RHUBARB FESTIVAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from—let me get this—Elgin—Middlesex—London. I trip on that one all the time.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: That's right—a tongue twister. Thank you, Speaker.

This past weekend was the 20th anniversary of Rosy Rhubarb Festival in Shedden, Ontario. Twenty years ago, a small group of people gathered together with an idea to promote the small rural community of Shedden, Ontario,

and also raise some money for a new community complex.

Gary Carr, one of the initiators of the fundraising idea, also masqueraded as Rosy Rhubarb. Gary passed away in December 1996, and the organizing committee decided no one else could do the job the way Gary did, and retired his costume. But the spirit of Rosy Rhubarb lives on. Every year, on the second weekend in June, they celebrate the plant that put their village on the map. Gardens are lush with ripe rhubarb waiting to be turned into tasty treats for friends, families and visitors. Only the best pies, tarts and cakes make it into the annual rhubarb bakeoff. The winning entries are auctioned off on the Friday night of the festival, kicking off a weekend of fun, community spirit and fundraising.

To date, the Rosy Rhubarb Festival, an alcohol-free event, has raised more than \$800,000. The Rosy Rhubarb Festival is organized and run entirely by volunteers from the community. Special thanks to Jean and Ralph Palmer, Lorne Spicer, and chairman Keith Orchard for their continued service to this event and community.

I wanted to share the excitement of this rural festival. I have brought strawberry-rhubarb pie for the PC, NDP and Liberal caucuses. Remember to think of Rosy when you enjoy your pie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I hope the member doesn't forget the Speaker, either.

PETER VOYNOVICH

Ms. Cindy Forster: Mr. Speaker, on May 29, 2012, the community of Welland lost a 39-year veteran professional firefighter. Peter Voynovich, age 60, was laid to rest with a funeral and honour guard befitting a wonderful and kind husband, father, friend and devoted firefighter. Hundreds of firefighters from across the province attended to pay their respects. Welland's fire chief, Denys Prevost, described him as an expert at his work.

Peter and his wife, Connie, faced many health challenges over the last few years, but lived each day with hope and enthusiasm. Peter's spirit was an inspiration for all who met him. Peter's passing was a line-of-duty death because of colon cancer that he valiantly fought for five years and that was related to his career.

In June 2007, the province moved on presumptive legislation for firefighters, allowing injured workers' benefits for them and their families. Unfortunately, Ontario has fallen behind other provinces who have broadened their scopes for protections for firefighters for other cancers and recently have recognized post-traumatic stress disorder.

Regrettably, over the last five years, firefighters have lost their lives in the line of duty and have gone to their graves and are not recognized in Ontario, to the detriment of their families.

For Peter's family, his wife, Connie, and sons, Joshua, Matthew and Peter, let's do the right thing. Let's expand our scope and let's protect firefighters like Peter from work-related illnesses.

FRIENDS FOR LIFE

AMIES POUR LA VIE

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to take a moment to speak about one of the great groups in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell that supports the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation's Run for the Cure. The fundraising team is called Friends for Life, or Amies pour la vie.

Friends for Life was formed in 2010 by Marie-Claire Ivanski, Ginette Rivet, a breast cancer survivor, and Lorraine Dicaire. They formed their own team after seeing the difference the breakfast made to survivors in terms of support and the importance of money raised for research and awareness.

The 2013 team has added two new dynamic members, Diane Bourdeau, the 2012 breast cancer breakfast guest of honour and breast cancer survivor, and Nicole Gosselin-Séguin, whose mother-in-law, Jacynthe Séguin, passed away from breast cancer at the age of 57. It was her death that inspired Friends for Life to fight their fight.

Une femme sur neuf est susceptible de développer un cancer du sein au cours de sa vie, et ce, chez les femmes au-dessus de l'âge de 20 ans.

The Friends for Life mission is to raise important dollars for funding research, education and awareness programs, and reducing the stigma of breast cancer. It is also building a network of support in our communities for our breast cancer survivors, to give hope for tomorrow by standing united today.

La mission des Amies pour la vie est aussi de créer un réseau d'appui dans nos communautés pour nos survivantes du cancer du sein et d'offrir de l'espoir pour demain en s'entraidant aujourd'hui.

Friends for Life has many fundraising activities, including an annual fundraising breakfast, a trip to Quebec City draw, a candlelighting ceremony, a Victorian tea and a garden tour on June 23, and a bingo in October later this year.

Speaker, I'm very proud of this local initiative. I congratulate Friends for Life and wish them all the very best in their future endeavours and their hard work. Congratulations. Félicitations.

WORLD UNIVERSITY ARCHERY CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to share with the Ontario Legislature today my congratulations to a constituent of mine, Nathan Urquhart, who will be flying to Madrid on July 1 to represent Canada at the ninth annual World University Archery Championship. This is Nathan's first major archery competition, and I have heard that he's extremely excited and honoured to have this opportunity.

Nathan will be representing Canada and the world at the world championship, along with four teammates who are from Alberta and Ottawa.

This is a big sacrifice for these athletes, as this is an athlete-funded event. I know that they have worked long

and hard and made some significant sacrifices to get to this championship. I admire their hard work and dedication to their sport.

I want to wish Nathan and his teammates the best of luck at the World University Archery Championship and offer our congratulations for achieving this great honour.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: There are 19 families in and around Nickel Belt who have lost loved ones or suffered adverse events while Ornge was involved. The weight of the doubt, that maybe things could have gone differently, weighs very heavily on their shoulders. For some, it's almost too much to bear.

Those people deserve an independent third party to investigate their complaints, to help them turn the page, lift the weight that doubts have put on their shoulders and find closure. They deserve Ombudsman oversight.

The Minister of Health has put in front of this House Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services. She wants to make sure that what happened at Ornge—the debacle—never happens again. Yet Bill 50 does not include Ombudsman oversight.

We will all win when people confronted with adverse health events or families who have lost a loved one can have their complaints investigated by an independent and impartial third party.

After everything we've heard about Ornge, from the \$1.4-million salary to the private loans and the web of for-profit companies feeding off public funds, the people of Ontario deserve Ombudsman oversight.

Will the Minister of Health agree to amend the bill to show compassion for the families affected and caught in the middle of this mess and give the Ombudsman the right to investigate their complaints?

AJAX HOME WEEK

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to let everybody know about the great 42nd annual Ajax Home Week, which commences today, Monday, June 11.

There's an Albion Amusements carnival all week at Zellers. The Legion is open all day to all residents. They don't have to be members.

The town unfolds hospitality. Tonight, there is Lions Pasta Night. On Tuesday, there's the free Ajax Seniors Day at the Legion. You don't even have to be a member. You're covered, including your meal.

There's free swimming at the McLean centre from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, which I sponsor. On Wednesday, we have Scrambles 8th Annual Home Week barbecue that goes all day. We also have the Ajax Home Week Peace and Community Harmony Concert at the McLean Centre. It's free of charge. St. Louis Bar and Grill—prizes for the winners. I better hurry up.

Ajax Home Week Auction at the Legion on Thursday. St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church barbecue.

Friday—pre-parade events. There's entertainment from 6 to 9 at Durham Centre. A free community barbecue; again, it's my MPP office. We served 1,600 people last year. The Home Week parade: We kick off the summer at Finn McCool's lobster fest that night. Saturday is the Salvation Army's soaker fest.

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But the big day is Sunday, June 17. It's waterfront day, it's Father's Day, and the whole family is welcome. Most of the day is free at the waterfront. There's a classic car show at Finn McCool's. There are crafters. There's fun in the sun, with six different children's rides, all free for the family. The police helicopter from Durham region drops in, and it goes on and on.

I'm going to have to pull the plug on it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think so.

Mr. Joe Dickson: But there are the largest fireworks in all of Durham region on the Sunday night—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Glad to hear it.

Mr. Joe Dickson:—starting at dusk, at 10 p.m.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Joe Dickson: And thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member pulled his own plug. Thank you very much.

CITY OF KITCHENER

Mr. Michael Harris: Yesterday marked Kitchener's 100th anniversary as a city. Thousands of proud residents joined together on Sunday to remember our community's past, celebrate our heritage and look forward to our future.

Kitchener's story began in 1852, when new settlers from Germany and across Europe founded a small rural community in southern Ontario. Over the next 60 years, they worked together to build up the local economy and attract new residents to what had become an industrial hub for a provincial economy.

In 1912, Kitchener, then called Berlin, became a city which more than 15,000 people called home. Since then, Kitchener's population has grown rapidly, attracting people from all different backgrounds and cultures.

In fact, new Canadians make up a quarter of Kitchener's population, which is now more than 200,000. These newcomers to Kitchener have done so much to contribute to our community, whether it's by educating residents about their cultures or by opening up successful new businesses. Their strong and unwavering work ethic reflects the long-standing reputation of our community. Not even the Great Depression or the recessions of the 1980s or 1990s, as well as the financial crisis of 2008, could break our community's resolve. We have always found a way to bounce back, succeed and evolve.

Manufacturing continues to be a staple of the local economy, but Kitchener has also developed as a vital part of Canada's renowned research and innovation capital.

The last 100 years have been nothing short of amazing, and I'm sure, if the past is any guide, Kitchener has an exciting and promising future in store.

PROLUCID TECHNOLOGIES

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Mississauga, like countless communities across Ontario, began life as a farming community. In particular, specifically, it was apple orchards that were original economy of Mississauga. Even today, we have a lot of names that celebrate that heritage. In my riding, we have names like Golden Orchard, Orchard Street, Applewood etc.

But over the years, Mississauga's economy has obviously evolved and diversified and prospered, because like most successful communities, that's what you have to do: Reinvent yourself over and over again.

I've always wondered how this reinvention takes place. How do you go from a community that has been farming orchards to aviation manufacturing? How does that happen? I got a peek into that last Thursday when I visited a company called Prolucid Technologies. I was there to announce, and I'm really proud to say, that we just gave them a grant of \$887,000. What they're going to do with that is create eight new jobs—not just any jobs, but the kind of jobs that Mississauga and Ontario and Canada need to have a prosperous future.

Prolucid is involved in the smart grid. It's going to smarten up our electricity grid. What does that mean? The best way it was explained to me was that Prolucid is going to do for Ontario's electricity grid what smart phones did for cellphones.

I am so proud to have this little jewel in my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I very much appreciate the opportunity today to rise in support of the independent school bus industry. I know that several of my colleagues have spoken out in support of small and rural independent school bus operators throughout Ontario.

On April 27, the Minister of Education received a letter from the school bus industry, asking for clarification on non-negotiated fixed-fee contracts, to see if they were actually a form of competitive procurement that complies with the BPS procurement directive. They further asked the minister if school boards and consortia would have an answer in time to plan for the 2013 competitive procurement deadline.

As you can understand, Speaker, these small, independent school bus operators require an answer from this government. However, they are still waiting.

In the past, I've asked the Minister of Education to release the Coulter Osborne report. When it was finally released, we learned that there were some key recommendations, including that further study was needed to ensure that the government was moving in the right direction for this particular industry, and that an in-

dependent third party conduct a review of the procurement process. One can speculate that he did not believe this government was up to the challenge and had the confidence in them to conduct the review properly themselves.

It appears to the school bus industry and to the opposition that the Minister of Education has ignored these recommendations, and that is unfortunate. I can assure you, Speaker, that members on this side of the House will continue to stand up for independent school bus operators because, I must say, they're an important part of rural and small town Ontario because they know our children and our children know them.

ANNUAL REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2011-12 annual report of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also beg to inform the House that, pursuant to section (a) of the order of the House passed on May 31, 2012, the House leaders have indicated in writing to the Clerk of the House that the following two private members' public bills have been selected: Bill 8, An Act respecting an underground infrastructure notification system for Ontario, and Bill 33, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to gender identity and gender expression.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING EMPLOYEES' TIPS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA PROTECTION DU POURBOIRE DES EMPLOYÉS

Mr. Prue moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to tips and other gratuities / *Projet de loi 107, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les pourboires et autres gratifications.*

Mr. Prue moved first reading of the following bill:

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The bill prohibits employers from taking any portion of an employee's tips or other gratuities: simple as that.

HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE CREDIT SCORING BAN ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 INTERDISANT LE RECOURS AU POINTAGE DE CRÉDIT POUR L'ASSURANCE PROPRIÉTAIRE OCCUPANT

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act to amend the Insurance Act to ban the use of credit history and ratings in respect of homeowners and other personal property insurance / *Projet de loi 108, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances en vue d'interdire le recours aux antécédents en matière de crédit et aux cotes de solvabilité relativement à l'assurance propriétaire occupant et à d'autres types d'assurance de biens meubles.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bill, if passed, will prohibit insurers from using, in respect of personal property insurance, a person's credit history or rating as grounds for the following: (1) declining to issue, terminate or refusing to renew a contract, or refusing to provide or continue any coverage or endorsement in respect of a contract; and (2) classifying risk in the determination of rates for the coverage of a category of insurance.

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In other words, we banned credit scoring for auto; now it's about time we banned it for home insurance to protect consumers.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice concerning the order passed by the House on May 31, 2012.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader seeks unanimous consent to introduce a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding section (a), private members' public bills, of the order passed by the House on May 31, 2012, the requirement that the order for third reading of Bill 8, An Act respecting an underground infrastructure notification system for Ontario, be discharged and that the bill be recommitted to the Standing Committee on General Government be waived, and that Bill 8 remain ordered for third reading; and

That the order for third reading of Bill 8, An Act respecting an underground infrastructure notification

system for Ontario, may be called during morning orders of the day on Thursday, June 14, 2012.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader has moved this motion. Are we in agreement? Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I received this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario through the Honourable Bob Chiarelli and the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur.

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by the ... horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.3 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the" entire "province for OLG;

"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion a year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Call on the Ontario government to:

"(1) protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program;

"(2) direct OLG to honour the contracts with race-tracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

I support the members of Nepean-Carleton who signed this, and I will sign and affix my signature as well, and present it to Anthonie.

CYCLING

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 28% of Ontario adults regularly cycle and over 50% of children cycle either daily or weekly;

"Whereas a cycling fatality occurs every month in Ontario and thousands of cyclists are injured each month;

"Whereas Ontario is lagging behind provinces like British Columbia and Quebec that have invested \$31 million and \$200 million respectively in cycling infrastructure;

"Whereas investing in cycling infrastructure in Ontario will create jobs and benefit the economy, reduce traffic congestion and pollution, protect those sharing the road, encourage active transportation and improve public health;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario release a comprehensive bicycling strategy for Ontario that facilitates the development of policy and legislation relating to bicycling in Ontario. This policy would include dedicated funding to match municipal investments in cycling infrastructure, education initiatives to raise awareness about the rights and responsibilities of all road users, and a review and update of provincial legislation, including the Highway Traffic Act and Planning Act, to ensure roadways are safe for all users;

"That the strategy set provincial targets and timelines for increasing the number of people who commute by bike and cycle recreationally."

Speaker, I approve of this petition. I'll affix my name to it and give it to page Kendra.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased today to present a petition on behalf of Mary Grant from Kitchener, Ontario. She lives on Vanier Drive. I know she was out over the weekend celebrating Kitchener's 100th anniversary. I want to thank her for this wonderful petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Katie.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd like to remind the members that they can offer a brief summary of their petitions, if they'd like to expedite this.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the horse racing industry employs approximately 60,000 people, creates \$1.5 billion in wages and \$2 billion in recurring expenditures annually; and

"Whereas the partnership that was created between government and the horse breeding and racing industry has been a model arrangement and is heralded throughout North America, with 75% of revenues going to the provincial government to fund important programs like health care and education, 5% to the municipalities and only 20% goes back to the horse business; and

"Whereas the horse business is a significant source of revenue for the farming community and rural municipalities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Finance continue the revenue-sharing partnership with the horse racing industry for the benefit of Ontario's agricultural and rural economies."

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Annaleise to the clerks' desk.

RADIATION SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario.

"Whereas there are risks inherent in the use of ionizing, magnetic and other radiations in medical diagnostic and radiation therapy procedures; and

"Whereas the main piece of legislation governing these activities, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (HARPA), dates from the 1980s; and

"Whereas neither the legislation nor the regulations established under the act have kept pace with the explosion in imaging examinations, including image-guided procedures used in cardiology, radiation therapy, ultrasound, orthopaedics etc.;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care establish, as soon as possible, a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act to bring it up to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and covers all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I support this recommendation, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask page Colin to bring it to you.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm delighted today to present a petition on behalf of Vera Hicks, who's from Little Britain, Ontario—a great community.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bioartificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Kyra.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas industrial wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values; and

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments; and

"That the Minister of the Environment conduct a thorough scientific study on the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines."

I agree with this petition. I will be signing it and giving it off to page Anthonie.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have 1,000 petitions signed regarding auto insurance. It reads as follows:

"Whereas auto insurance rates are too high in the province of Ontario and continue to increase;

"Whereas families across the greater Toronto area ... are facing unfair insurance premiums that have more to do with where they live than their accident history or driving ability; and

"Whereas insurance premiums across the GTA differ by as much as 150% for drivers with the same driving record;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly undertake auto insurance reforms that protect consumers, ensuring that premiums are based on a fair assessment of a driver's known ability and history, rather than unfairly targeting drivers on the basis of where they live."

I support this petition, will affix my signature, and hand it to page Annaleise.

RADON

Ms. Dipika Damerla: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas radon is an inert gas formed by the radioactive decay of uranium-238, which is present in rocks and soils in the earth's crust;

"Whereas there have been many studies linking radon gas as a cancer-causing agent;

"Whereas studies have covered various aspects of radon exposure as a prevalent carcinogen in various locations, the most predominant locations being" mines "and residential homes; and

"Whereas currently there is no regulation in Ontario that governs what is an acceptable level of radon in a public and/or private dwelling;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support private member's Bill 36, introduced by Reza Moridi, MPP, Richmond Hill, on February 23, 2012, which would enact the Radon Awareness and Prevention Act, 2012, and amend the Building Code Act, 1992, with respect to radon."

I present this petition to page Tameem.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have a petition here being read, actually, for the first time in the assembly. It's from several hundred concerned citizens.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care unilaterally introduced cuts to funding for physician services and diagnostic testing; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has implemented these cuts without consulting the Ontario Medical Association; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has no alternative plan to ensure the standard of care for patients is uninterrupted; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has cut funding for ophthalmologists' diagnostic equipment by up to 80%; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care prohibits individuals from paying privately for OHIP-funded tests; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has not given physicians the final funding amounts for services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To agree to meet and negotiate in good faith with the Ontario Medical Association; and

"To properly fund the health care system in Ontario, given that the population is increasing at approximately 1.2% annually; and

"To give the Ontario Medical Association the final funding amounts for services."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and give it to page Sam.

GREY BRUCE HEALTH UNIT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that came to me from the people of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. It reads as follows:

"Whereas residents of Bruce and Grey counties do not support the closure of the Walkerton office of the Grey Bruce Health Unit; and

"Whereas board of health members have not been consulted regarding the closure; and

"Whereas the Grey Bruce Health Unit administration has failed to release the cost-benefit analysis used to determine why the Walkerton office of the Grey Bruce Health Unit should be permanently closed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct the Grey Bruce Health Unit's medical officer of health to keep the Walkerton office of the health unit open and fully operational."

I will send this with Tameem.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas currently the chair of the regional municipality of York is not an elected official and is appointed;

"Whereas currently the population of the regional municipality of York is approximately one million and forecasted to reach 1.5 million within the next 20 years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support private member's Bill 60, brought forward by Reza Moridi, MPP for Richmond Hill, which would amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide that the head of council of the regional municipality of York must be elected and may not be appointed."

I fully agree with this petition, sign it and pass it on to page Andrew.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM OFFICE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario decided to close the Ontario Disability Support Program office in St. Thomas, an office which serves over 3,245 people of our most vulnerable population throughout St. Thomas and Elgin county;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made this decision without consultation;

"Whereas the majority of clients don't have access to transportation to London to attend appointments with their caseworker, which may result in loss of benefits;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Community and Social Services consult with the city of St. Thomas and Elgin county to find a solution to keep the ODSP office open in St. Thomas."

I agree with this petition and I affix my signature to it.

INDOOR TANNING EQUIPMENT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Hey, hey, hey.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): She's right; she's correct.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's nice to see you're looking at me.

"Whereas there is a growing body of evidence linking tanning bed use to increased cancer risk...; and

"Whereas many groups, including the Canadian Cancer Society and the Ontario Medical Association, support a ban on the use of indoor tanning equipment by youths under the age of 18; and

"Whereas the provinces of British Columbia and Nova Scotia have passed legislation banning youths from using indoor tanning equipment...; and

"Whereas there is broad public support in Ontario for increased regulation of the tanning industry, with 83% supporting a ban on indoor tanning for those under 18;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning youths under the age of 18 from using indoor tanning equipment except in the case of medical need."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Angela to bring it to the Clerk.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is in serious need of modernization;

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is not in harmony with all the following acts, regulations, guidelines and codes: the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario, the radiation protection regulations of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the safety codes of Health Canada and the radiation protection guidelines of the International Commission on Radiological Protection;

"Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by Reza Moridi, the member from Richmond Hill, that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations, make recommendations on how to modernize this act, and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I add my signature to this and will pass it to page Alexander.

OPTICAL COHERENCE TOMOGRAPHY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the optical coherence test (OCT) is critical for the treatment of macular degeneration, glaucoma, vascular disease of the retina and diabetic macular edema; and

"Whereas the government has reduced funding for the OCT test; and

"Whereas the reduction of funding will result in loss of vision for many Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge our leaders to reverse the recent cuts in health care, and specifically to fund the OCT test at a level that will continue to give the best possible eye care for our population."

I affix my signature, as I agree with this petition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The time for petitions has expired. Again, I know there are a number of members who would have wanted to present petitions this afternoon. Had the members been willing to abbreviate their petitions, then everyone would have had a chance to present their petitions today. Given the fact that this is the last week of the spring sitting, I would encourage all members to endeavour to abbreviate their petitions if possible, so as to allow everybody to get their petitions in.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe that you will find we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private bills.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to bring forward a motion with respect to private bills. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that the orders for second and third reading of the following private bills shall be called consecutively, and that the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bills be put immediately without debate:

Bill Pr1, An Act to revive Coutu Gold Mines Limited;

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting Master's College and Seminary;

Bill Pr4, An Act to revive Hili Enterprises Ltd.; and

That Mr. Leal, the member from Peterborough, may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr1 on behalf of Mr. Orazietti, the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Milloy has moved that the orders for second and third reading of the following private bills shall be called consecutively, and that the questions on the motions for second—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Dispense? Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COUTU GOLD MINES LIMITED ACT, 2012

Mr. Leal, on behalf of Mr. Orazietti, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr1, An Act to revive Coutu Gold Mines Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

COUTU GOLD MINES LIMITED ACT, 2012

Mr. Leal, on behalf of Mr. Orazietti, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr1, An Act to revive Coutu Gold Mines Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

MASTER'S COLLEGE AND SEMINARY ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2012

Mr. Leal moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting Master's College and Seminary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

MASTER'S COLLEGE AND SEMINARY ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2012

Mr. Leal moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting Master's College and Seminary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

HILI ENTERPRISES LTD. ACT, 2012

Ms. Damerla moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr4, An Act to revive Hili Enterprises Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

HILI ENTERPRISES LTD. ACT, 2012

Ms. Damerla moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr4, An Act to revive Hili Enterprises Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

ATTRACTING INVESTMENT AND CREATING JOBS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT À ATTIRER LES INVESTISSEMENTS ET À CRÉER DES EMPLOIS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 10, 2012, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act respecting the continuation and establishment of development funds in order to promote regional economic development in eastern and southwestern Ontario / Projet de loi 11, Loi concernant la prorogation et la création de fonds de développement pour promouvoir le développement économique régional dans l'Est et le Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to rise again to continue our opposition to Bill 11 and continue the debate on this bill.

We've been, on our side of the House, very clear and consistent on why we can't spend an extra \$160 million at this point in time. Bill 11 proposes \$160 million in new spending at a time when Ontario has a deficit of \$16 billion.

It's ironic that across the globe recently, we're seeing the trouble with Greece running into massive debt and

deficits. On the weekend, Spain just got a bailout, in fact, of €100 billion. In Spain, we see unemployment at 25%. It's the position of our party that, come hell or high water, we're not going to allow Ontario to become a Greece or a Spain, and that's the reason for our opposition to this bill, Bill 11. Ontario, under this government, is heading in the wrong direction: a deficit of \$16 billion and a debt, according to Don Drummond, that could reach \$411 billion by 2017-18.

We just saw the job numbers released last Friday. Ontario lost 31,000 full-time jobs in the month of May. I was at the press conference with the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation where he blamed the troubles in the United States for Ontario's job woes. But it's also ironic that companies are leaving Ontario. We saw General Motors in the last couple of weeks announce that they're heading to Detroit and Tennessee. So the minister is blaming the United States for Ontario's job losses, yet jobs are leaving Ontario for the United States.

The government is heading in the wrong direction here in Ontario, and we need a real jobs plan. That's what we've been talking about consistently. Urgent action is needed. We need to create the environment for growth and for jobs to prosper, for businesses to prosper. What we don't need is Bill 11, which is \$160 million in more spending, in more corporate handouts. On a long-term basis, corporate handouts don't work. They're not sustainable.

We're standing up for the taxpayers, here on this side of the House, in why we oppose Bill 11, and it's really very simple: This government has a huge spending problem. Spending more money when you're in debt, with a debt the size that Ontario faces, is a bad decision. It's the wrong decision and it's not going to help Ontario families get back to work.

For example, our party, our caucus, believes that the current apprenticeship system needs to change. The system is out of date and is not creating the jobs that Ontarians need. This would be one point that I'd like to make this afternoon: Instead of spending \$160 million, let's get the apprenticeship system reformed so we can create up to 200,000 jobs.

The Ministry of Finance predicts there are going to be over one million skilled-job vacancies by 2021, despite Ontario's job crisis. We have a labour shortage. Modernizing Ontario's apprenticeship system, as I said, would help create 200,000 skilled trades jobs over four years. This is good policy. Allowing employers to take on more apprentices, and giving more responsibility to colleges to match apprentices up with employers, would help more young people find skilled trades jobs. This would certainly help businesses and people unemployed in southwestern Ontario, and in eastern Ontario as well. Our caucus would lower the apprenticeship ratio to 1 to 1 while delegating more responsibility to Ontario colleges, as I said, for matching apprentices with employers.

People want to work in the skilled trades, but this government once again is preventing job growth and economic growth from happening here in Ontario. In one

simple, practical step, we can give 200,000 men and women employment opportunity, a good career in the skilled trades right here in the province of Ontario.

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Imagine the impact this will have on new home construction, infrastructure maintenance and on industrial output. Imagine the jobs there if we had a government that would take our PC plan to create 200,000 jobs.

In most provinces around this great country, employers are allowed to hire one apprentice for every journeyman employed. In Ontario, some trades require as many as five journeymen to hire one apprentice, limiting the number of young people who can find work. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has said, "The sole limiting factor in our ability to train more apprentices is the journeyman/apprentice ratio requirements" in Ontario.

Ontario faces a big and growing jobs-training deficit, producing 46% fewer tradespeople per capita than in the rest of the country. Because of the Premier's dismal record on creating apprenticeship positions, only one in four Ontario apprentices finishes their job training. Ontario will face up to one million skilled trades vacancies by 2021 without urgent action to reform an antiquated system. There are jobs that can be created with little to no cost, versus the approach we're seeing by this government with Bill 11, which is another big spending bill. Why does the McGuinty government think that the only way to solve problems is to spend hard-earned taxpayers' money?

Ontario is lagging behind the rest of the world as well. In the 1990s, Australia reformed its training system and the number of apprentices doubled between 1995 and 2000. The UK, France and Sweden have also increased their number of apprenticeship positions through similar reforms.

Speaker, this is an opportunity for this government, and they're doing nothing to take advantage of this. Enough is enough. It's time that the spending stops and the current structures that are in place are changed to encourage opportunities for people in Ontario.

And I hear, time and time again, from my constituents in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex that they don't want a government that favours one region over another or one industry over another. Importantly, they want a change in direction: new thinking and new ideas coming from their government. But this Premier and this government just don't get it.

It's not just members of the opposition saying this, Speaker. As reported in the *Ottawa Citizen* on November 15, 2011, the recent Roger Martin report has asked that the government abandon "its policy of picking 'winners and losers' ... through subsidies to businesses." This is a respected dean from the Rotman School of Management saying this.

Another interesting fact comes from a study done by the Fraser Institute which uncovers that government has spent a total of nearly \$30 billion on corporate handouts. The money has been spent based on the promise that the

economic state in Ontario will get better, and we all know that the state of the economy in Ontario is actually getting worse, thanks to the decisions made by this government.

It has been proven over and over again that the Premier's spending legacy is not working. It has proven itself to be a complete and utter failure. The people of Ontario may sit back and ask, "How did this happen? How did the economic state of Ontario get so bad?" You see, Speaker, in Ontario, revenue is actually up \$35 billion under this government, but spending is up \$45 billion. This year alone, and currently, we're spending nearly \$2 million more each hour than we are taking in—\$2 million of hard-earned taxpayers' money is being spent more than what's coming in on the revenue side.

The single biggest cost driver on the spending side is public sector compensation and the expansion of government. This is not what we stand for, and this is not affordable. It never was affordable, Speaker. That is why we have called—and my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London introduced a great piece of legislation calling for a public sector wage freeze, something that will save families over \$2 billion in the next two years alone. Unfortunately, our leader, Tim Hudak, and our PC caucus were the only party in this House to support my fellow colleague's bill from Elgin-Middlesex-London.

While a public sector wage freeze won't turn our entire province around, it does signal that things are changing in Ontario and that we will not continue down our current path.

You see, what is affordable for Ontario families is creating an attractive environment to run a business, a place where costs are predictable and where small businesses and entrepreneurs can come and grow their businesses. I believe in a system of free enterprise, a system where people and businesses create jobs, not government.

Speaker, in Ontario, our revenue is at an all-time high, but it is uncontrolled spending on things like public sector compensation that's the problem. The current government has not posed a single new idea for reining in spending. The Premier really only knows how to do one thing, and that's spend. I guess another good proof point is the fact that when this Premier was elected and this government was elected in 2003, 20,000 employees in the public sector made over \$100,000 a year. This year, that number is going to hit 80,000, so the size and cost of government has grown dramatically. It's a problem and why we have a \$16-billion deficit and a debt that's going to hit \$411 billion if we continue down the same path.

So we have all of this spending going on, all of this debt and massive deficit, and we also have 600,000 people unemployed. It relates: If you have a massive debt and a massive deficit, you're going to have fewer jobs in the province and more people unemployed. We're seeing that across the globe right now.

I sometimes question and ask myself how can this government and their members sleep at night knowing that when it comes to the jobs crisis and the debt crisis in

Ontario, they're kicking the can down the road to the next generation. The reckless spending and inability to define priorities are at the root of the crisis we face today. The Premier has no idea what to do, so the Premier just keeps on spending, like Bill 11, hoping that something will work, something will stick and that something might change here in the province. We can't depend on much these days, but we can count on one thing, if given the chance under this Premier, and that is that spending will increase, the deficit will increase, jobs will continue to leave, and the people of Ontario will continue to suffer with higher taxes, higher hydro bills and skyrocketing debt levels.

Our position is quite clear: We can't support additional spending without significant savings elsewhere. It's as simple as that. We have to get our fundamentals right. We have to get our books back in balance, and that will lead to job creation in the province, especially in particular by getting the fundamentals of the economy right. Government can't buy things that the public can't afford. Families in Ontario understand this. Small businesses in Ontario certainly understand this. Our caucus, the PC caucus, members of our opposition, understand this.

To be clear, it's not the government's job to pick winners and losers amongst privately owned companies. Ontario families simply can't afford these corporate subsidies any longer. It seems that the only people not to understand this are the members of the government.

Red tape and increased government spending are not helping our economy, either. Instead, we are seeing the debt rise daily. In Ontario we have hundreds of thousands of regulations that are really tying the hands of business owners. Business owners should have the time to dedicate their days to creating jobs in the province of Ontario, not dealing with red tape from some government inspector coming through the door.

The economy is getting worse and worse because the government is still spending. As I said, back to Friday's announcement with 31,000 full-time jobs lost in the month of May because of this government, we're heading on the wrong track and things every month seem to be getting a little worse. Our party has been clear that we don't want Ontario to be the next Greece, the next Spain. We have to get our books back in order.

Speaker, as you know, myself and our leader and caucus strongly oppose corporate welfare. We strongly oppose government slush funds such as the one being proposed. We strongly believe that now is the time to reduce spending, not increase it. As I have stated here today, and as we have stated since the election, we can't support additional spending without some cutbacks elsewhere.

Just on a little personal note—a lot of the members of the House will know this—I come from a family business background in southwestern Ontario. I'm proud to say that our family has been in business since 1948. It started with my grandfather and then my father and my brother and myself. It's a Home Hardware Building Centre, an

auto and farm supply store and an LCBO agency store. We have 65 employees. And I can tell you that it's all about governments getting the conditions right for businesses to prosper. It's about cutting red tape. It's about getting the fiscal house in order.

It's about having affordable energy—because that's the one thing in my riding and as I tour the province that I hear in my portfolio as economic development and innovation critic: that hydro bills are killing jobs. I rose in the House a few weeks ago to deliver the bad news that the Sobeyes grocery store in Wallaceburg is closing. It actually closed this week, I believe: 70 jobs gone in Wallaceburg, a hard-hit area of the province, in my riding. Time and time again, I hear about hydro bills going through the roof. They've doubled, on average, over the last number of years under this government and are set to go up almost 50% over the next four or five years. It's by far the number one job killer.

Again, we're opposed to Bill 11. We're opposed to \$160 million in new spending when the deficit is skyrocketing, the debt is skyrocketing. We really want the government to listen to our caucus, to our leader, to get the fundamentals right, because that's what we're hearing as we travel the province.

With that, I will end and encourage all members here today to join with me in opposing bigger government and more spending, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll have an opportunity in the next 10 minutes to do my lead on this bill, which will give us about an hour, and I will critique much of what the Conservatives stand for when I have that hour.

But I do want to thank the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for supporting the amendments that I introduced around Bill 11. This is one of the bills around which we were able to achieve amendments for the very first time. They are before us in this bill, and we could not have done it without the support of the Conservative members who were a part of that committee. Every now and then, you see, we can work together to make some changes. I'll be able to speak to those amendments—because I suspect that while you may not agree with all of them, you did agree with the majority of them. People deserve to know that New Democrats and Conservatives made those amendments together, with much resistance from the Liberal caucus on that committee. I'll speak to that in about 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: It's a pleasure for me today to speak on Bill 11, the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act. I can tell you, as a former mayor, that we have a number of businesses in my municipality and in my riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell that have benefited from this particular fund. In particular, Bentley Leathers, last fall, was a recipient of this, and they were able to expand their business and innovate.

I'm confused as to why the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and the Conservative Party are not in

favour of this, because we're doing what we can to create jobs in the province of Ontario. We get criticized when GM decides to move jobs elsewhere, but at the same time, I would suspect that they were looking for the government to prop them up as well, to keep those jobs.

This is a great bill—very well supported by the mayors and the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus in eastern Ontario, and it would certainly benefit those in southwest Ontario.

I've got a few seconds here. I just want to touch on a letter that Minister Duguid had sent to Mr. McNaughton. We're looking for a response on this particular bill. The minister says: "I am writing you today to request that we allow debate to collapse before the Legislature adjourns on Monday to allow the legislation to be called for a final vote on Monday afternoon, which we would then ask be deferred until Tuesday, June 12, 2012, during deferred votes."

We need to get this legislation passed. We're looking for a good partnership, co-operation with the NDP to make sure that we can continue to create good jobs right across the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I stand today to discuss this bill. I have a number of problems with it.

First of all, my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell talked about the eastern Ontario wardens supporting this, and they did, but it was not for this reason. The bill was to solve some of the inequities with eastern Ontario, some of the problems we have, the lack of assessment. We're half the assessment, half the population that they are in western Ontario. Now they've taken this money that was assigned to our area and are spreading it around. It was an acknowledgment by the government that we had some competitive issues.

It's interesting to hear some of the credit they're taking today. We're looking at an economy where we're losing jobs to the US because we're no longer competitive. We can't go on spending money just because a pot of money is found. First of all, it was assigned for something else, and now it's just going to be spread around.

The comment about maybe keeping GM here—that was a problem with not being competitive. Our hydro rates are the highest in North America. How do you expect companies that are looking around to Americans—who are having their own problems, but if you're a company that's looking to set up employment, it doesn't look as bad as it does in Ontario today. So they're actually going down to the States. They get a better deal down there, because they can be competitive. Hydro rates are much less than ours; taxes are less than ours.

What we're looking for from this government is some new ideas. A former government here came into power under Mike Harris and looked at the roadblocks we had. We had over 250 agencies back then. Through a reduction in red tape, he brought that down to 150 in the short time he had to do that role. But this government has brought it back over 600. It chews up money we don't

have and it just gets in the way of business. I think we have to vote against this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? I return to the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thanks to the members from Trinity–Spadina and Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Speaker, listening in particular to the government member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, only Liberals believe that bigger government and government subsidies create long-term, sustainable jobs. They just in fact don't. Again, it's about getting the fundamentals right in the economy. It's about reforming the apprenticeship system to create 200,000 new jobs in the province and give opportunities to young people who are looking for work today. It's about getting affordable energy—the number one issue that businesses have in Ontario. It's about cutting red tape. We have hundreds of thousands of regulations on the books that are nothing but job-killers in this province. And of course, it's about government getting its fiscal house in order. We have a \$16-billion deficit, a debt that's heading to \$411 billion, and businesses are concerned about that. Why invest in a place like Ontario when you have a Liberal government spending \$16 million more per year than it's taking in? Young kids know that you can't spend that much more than you take in, in a year, and it's just disrespectful to the taxpayers and the small business owners, and all business owners in the province of Ontario, spending that much money.

I would like to put on the record, Speaker, that during budget negotiations, I know for a fact that the Liberals didn't even ask to have this bill passed. They didn't even bring it up on the list of bills that they wanted passed by the end of this session, so it actually is the Liberals, the Liberal Party, the Liberal government, that's holding this bill up now. We're going through the legislative debate on this bill, which is important for our democracy, and we're following through on that.

We're opposed to Bill 11: \$160 million in spending. We just can't afford it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 11, and I welcome the listeners who are watching this political forum. We are online. It's 2:10, early in the afternoon. I want to divide my speech into four areas, Speaker. I want to critique a bit what the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex has just put forth, and then I want to talk about the history of corporate tax cuts that both Liberals and Conservatives have engaged in that, in my view, haven't given us very much. Then I'll talk about some of the specifics of Bill 11 and about the amendments that we have made that I believe have made this bill a little better.

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Speaking to some of the things that the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex said—he is representing his

party on this, so he's not alone in thinking these things; obviously, all of his caucus members are deeply connected to these thoughts—he talks about having to change the apprenticeship system as a way of creating more jobs. He and his leader have talked about creating 250,000 jobs—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It was 250,000, you said.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It was 200,000.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Did that number change, or was it always 200,000?

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I thought it was a bit higher. Okay, I don't want to inflate those numbers unnecessarily. I want to be factual.

They said they would create 200,000 jobs by simply changing the ratios in the apprenticeship system. I don't know where they got that number, but it just comes out of the blue, Mr. Speaker. That number is not real. Most of the trades have a 1-to-1 ratio between the apprentice and the journeyperson. Some have a 1-to-2 ratio, and some have 1-to-3. There's a reason why unions and governments accepted those ratios in the past, and it has a lot to do with safety, generally speaking.

We've got a training centre that's looking at those numbers. I have to assume that the training centre is going to come up with a different way of doing our training, and they're involving a whole lot of sectors. At the end of the day, I am convinced they will come up with the right numbers that will basically modernize our apprenticeship system in a way that I think will be good for workers and good for Ontarians on the whole.

For the Conservatives to say, "We're going to change the ratio, make all trades 1-to-1, and lo and behold, that will create 200,000 jobs" is simply faux—false. It doesn't exist. Those numbers are not real. Those are numbers they've just picked out of a hat. It has a whole lot of people across Ontario persuaded that they're on to something. You don't have to be factual about those things; you just have to say it, and lo and behold, it becomes a reality. I wanted to put that out first and foremost, because I think that really needs a critique from different sectors.

The member from Lambton added that we should give responsibilities to colleges to match students and employers. It's not a bad idea. I think giving high school teachers in the co-op program more of an option, giving them power to be able to match people up, is not a bad idea. At the high school level, where we have the co-op program, once the students are out of that program, they are responsible individually for finding work. That's not right, in my mind, and it isn't practical. A young person simply has no way of connecting to an employer. In terms of where to do one's co-op, that individual, on his or her own, has no way of linking up to a potential employer. In my mind, the guidance teacher ought to be able to link those young people to prospective employers, rather than relying on the individual to find an employer with whom to do the co-op program. What happens is,

these young people end up doing something with a relative. Is that the best potential employment possibility that one could have? I don't think so. It's better than nothing, one would argue, but I really believe that guidance counsellors could be given enhanced powers to link people to employers and then find a way to make sure that we help those young people to find employment once the co-op is over.

Similarly, colleges, once young people have gone through that apprenticeship, could link them up to prospective employers and be given enhanced powers. I don't think that's a bad idea.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was speaking to the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, who, for 18 minutes, spoke about all the great economic ideas that you guys had, so I thought I would, in response to it, give you my critique.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Well, they were great ideas.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, and I'm critiquing those great ideas as best as I can. So I'm going to take—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Speaker is not irrelevant to the discussion in the House. I remind the member for Trinity—Spadina to make his remarks through the Chair.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: One of the Conservative members was saying, "Is this Bill 11?" I reminded him that his critic spoke for 18 minutes on other related issues connected to economic development. So it was just a reminder to him—through you always, of course, Speaker.

The other points he made: How do we create great economic development? They said, "We're going to cut red tape." I have to remind him and all of you fine Conservatives that Mike Harris simply cut that ribbon to death in eight and a half years. But Tories keep on insisting that there is more red tape to cut. That's the beauty of Tory inventions. If we've exhausted, chewed up, that red tape in eight and a half years, don't worry: We'll create other red tapes to cut, over and over again. I've got to admit, you guys are creative. I thought Mike Harris had done all the cutting he could. I thought he had carpal tunnel syndrome after all that cutting: eight and a half years. That's what you get after you cut eight and a half years: You get problems in the elbow. The Minister of Labour would know these things.

But no. Lo and behold, the member from Lambton-Kent said that we've still got to cut red tape. Okay.

He mentions that hydro is just too expensive. He's right, and we have been killing jobs in northern Ontario. Our former leader, Howard Hampton, would rail against Tories when they were in power, rail against Liberals for eight and a half years, saying, "Hydro rates are killing our jobs," and the mills out there are closing by the day because they can't afford to compete with Quebec in particular and Manitoba, and that we needed to get a handle on that so that we could keep jobs here in Ontario. So I remind my good Tory friends, most of whom are new to this place, and some who are old, of when—and

the Speaker would know because he was here then: Mike Harris began the privatization of the hydro system, something Tories dare not speak of. They talk about high hydro rates, but they don't say why.

You will recall, Speaker—as a friendly reminder to all the new Tories—that you guys gave away Bruce 2 to an English company.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, hold on. They gave Bruce 2 away to a British company. They privatized it. They gave it away for 16 or 17 long years, at the end of which, those fine British folks—who, I think, sold out and gave it to somebody else—would leave that fine nuclear system in the hands of the taxpayers, ready and willing to pay for the refurbishing of that Bruce 2 because taxpayers are so happy to help the private sector take the money, go, leave the trouble of the nuclear station in the hands of your friends, taxpayers, who are so happy to hold the bag and say, “We’re ready to pay \$1 billion, \$2 billion to refurbish while you take the millions, year in and year out, of the country.”

Tories are good. You Tories are really good. The first year that your Tory friends gave Bruce 2 away to the British company, do you know how much money they made? You wouldn't know. I have to help: 165 million bucks—all to the private sector to take as profit. Bruce 2 was profitable on its own in public hands. But no, we had to give it away to private hands so they could run it and make \$165 million that first year, 1996 through 1997.

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You Tories are really good at giving away public assets. You never talk about why hydro rates go up because of what you did. You created 14 different distributing companies to sell gas, to sell whatever rich resources we got; 14 distributing companies going around, knocking at your door, saying, “We can give you gas cheaper. Just sign up with us.” You know the scandal, Speaker. You and your friends know all the different scandals that have been going on for the last 10, 12 years.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And you, fine Tories, set up that system where you actually took it away from the public sector, because you know how badly run—and you gave it away to 14 different distributing companies so they could make the pecunia and put it in their deep, long pockets. That's okay. It's okay to privatize a system and give it away to the wealthy, but a public system that could work efficiently and take the money and give it back to the citizens and the taxpayers—“Oh, no, that's bad.”

You guys crack me up, honest to God, year in and year out. You crack me up.

Here, you've got the member from Lambton—Kent—you see, you said so much. You already spent 10 minutes, 12 minutes. The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex says, “Tories oppose corporate tax giveaways,” and they are opposed to corporate welfare. God bless. Here is the other dilemma, the paradoxical point that I wanted to point out to them through you, Speaker:

How come it is that they oppose the \$2 billion that Liberals have to give away to corporations—true, grants mostly—but they're not adverse or opposed to corporate tax cuts? You understand the paradox, Speaker? They're opposed to giving away money by governments for grants, but they are okay on the other side of the corporate ledger, meaning corporate tax cuts. So corporate tax cuts are not corporate welfare but corporate grants are. Do you understand? You understand what I'm getting at? I hope.

Mr. Bill Walker: Absolutely, Rosie. We're with you, buddy.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So I'm wondering, do you understand the paradox I put to you, and when you're doing at least your two minutes, you might comment on any one of these items, if you could, just to clarify in my mind at least, if not yours, what you mean by “corporate welfare.”

I want to be able to comment on this in a brief five minutes as I explore more deeply some of the other comments that the Tories continue to make.

They say that the real problem is that we spend too much.

Mr. Bill Walker: Well, you can't argue that. Even you can't argue that one.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But I can.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I can, and here's the problemo, Speaker. I find that I have to repeat it so often because I know that so many in this place don't listen. I know that I've got to repeat it at least seven times before people hear it.

When Mike Harris was in this fine place many years ago, he cut corporate taxes by \$13.4 billion—corporate and income. Understand, Speaker, what that means. When you cut \$13.4 billion, it's gone forever. So when spending increases ever so slightly, without that revenue, spending appears that it's outpacing, outracing corporate revenues.

Do you understand, fine Tories, what that means? If you keep cutting corporate taxes and income taxes, at some point spending is way out of whack with revenues.

Now, what I know about Tories is that they like to reduce governments to as little as possible. “Just make them tiny,” they say, although if you look at the Harper example, your federal cousins, they have spent a whole lot more than many other previous governments have. But don't be bothered by these. But it is interesting that when Harper got into the federal office, he spent a lot more than what he was actually bringing in. Because, remember, he cut the GST by two points, and that eliminated \$10 billion a year—\$10 billion a year. We wouldn't have had a deficit if he had kept that there. But he cut the GST. He was lucky enough that he had a good economy that brought in revenues with which he was able to grow the military by leaps and bounds. Because you know Harper is a real man. He's a real man, not just an ordinary man; he's a real man with guns and big stuff, right?

So, much of that money went to that sector, because he wants show the world that he's a tough guy and that on the call of the Americans he's ready to go and send a whole lot of Canadian soldiers to die, no matter how useless the war might be in Afghanistan. But that's okay. I mean, Tories can do what they like, and they do. They can contradict themselves as much as they want, and they do and pretend they don't.

Am I spending too much time on this, Speaker? You let me know. Just sort of say, in case. No, no, just in case—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Given that you've given me the opportunity, I would say that we're discussing Bill 11 and I would ask all members to confine their comments to the bill.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You see, I'm just trying to help you, because I was getting weary of attacking the Tories. You're so right.

But economic development is critical. There are a lot of issues around this economic development file, I have to admit. There's so much that could be done. I supported this initiative that the Liberals have introduced. Bill 11 was an initiative that New Democrats supported with changes, which we got. But I have to tell you, there are a lot of other things we could be doing. We could be doing, for example, what Quebec has done since 1985, 1986 or 1987, I think, where they have imposed a 1% payroll tax on companies and corporations that earn over \$1 million, and they put aside that 1% for job training. It's a big deal.

I introduced such a resolution in this place and it was defeated by Tories and, dare I say, Liberals. Not one Liberal stood to support my resolution, if I recall. But when we talk about training—job training, apprenticeship programs—that's what we could be doing. By the way, Quebec modelled this after the Irish and the French. It's not as if they necessarily, on their own, came up with that magical solution. They had other models.

The point is that we could do good training in this country, and we could model it after what Quebec has done. We need to improve our apprenticeship training. We need to. If we did it as well as the Germans did, it would work so well and workers would be trained so well. If we did it like Germany, governments, unions and the corporate sector would work together, not against each other. Even in Germany, under a conservative—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Government?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Government, yes, but I was looking for—

Mr. Bill Walker: Chancellor?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Chancellor, exactly—supports a model where the corporate sector, unions and governments work together. It makes sense. It means they're not at odds with each other. It means that corporations and unions are not killing each other and going after each other. It means governments are helping to bring these people together. It should be a tripartite effort, but you won't find Tories talking about that. No, no, no; Tories talk about the ratio: "If we just had 1 to 1, we'd create 200,000 jobs." It couldn't get more simplistic than that.

Mr. Bill Walker: So you support us?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No. It's a bad idea. It doesn't create the jobs it purports to. It's a lie. It doesn't do it.

The 1% payroll tax for job training would be a great idea. I say this for the Tories to reflect on.

1430

The other problem Tories don't speak about—and they should, because they are purportedly the party of business, but neither Liberals nor Conservatives are talking about it—is access to capital. Small businesses have been complaining about not being able to access capital from the banks for the last 22 years that I have been in this place. Where are the Tories on this? Where are the Liberals on this? When they both say small business creates 80% to 90% of the jobs, where are they when small businesses are saying, "We need access to capital and we're not getting it"? I haven't heard one Tory speak about that in the 22 years that I've been in this place. I haven't heard Liberals talk about this in the 22 years that I've been in the place. Wow. That's a big deal. So I bring it to your attention, Speaker, and through you to them, so they could reflect on it, because there's still time; there's always time to make things better and to change things. I offer that as a second idea.

The third one is that we are a country and a province rich in resources, and for the last 100 years we simply take the richness out of the earth and send it to America to process. How can that be good economic development? Why is it that Ontario and the government of Canada have never been able to come to grips with this problem where we extract, we export, then we re-import the finished product, and that's economic development? How could we not think about that? How could we not say, "This has to change"? We are a great mining country with a great deal of expertise. In fact, we're in South America, we're in Africa, we're everywhere with our expertise. Yet we import 90% of the instruments that we use for our own mining in our own provinces. How could that be? Why can't we change that around, which is what the NDP talked about in the last election? Why cannot we process our own resources?

Think about lumber. We export so much lumber to the world: to the US, to China, to everybody. Why can't we process that here instead of just exporting that resource? In Ontario, we have been closing the lumberyards in northern Ontario by the year, by the week, by the month, because, yes, hydro rates skyrocketed and we haven't been able to solve it. To be fair to the Liberals, after our former leader Howard Hampton badgered day in and day out, the Liberals finally, a couple of years back, decided to lower the rates somewhat, which I'm not sure has been able to save them, but to the extent that it did, it was because of the efforts that Howard Hampton had made in this Legislature to persuade Liberals year after year to do something. They would make fun of us, of course, until finally they did a little something. The point is, we need to process the richness of our resources, and not just export it.

The fourth point is that we've got to get the corporations to have a little Canadian pride. We have to start

building and start processing, start keeping the jobs in this province and in this country. Why is it that we lowered the corporate tax rates for the last 20, 25 years provincially and federally, and they take the money and then buy up bigger companies, put the money as cash reserves in banks, just leave it there and do not invest? Why is it that they do that and we put no obligations on those corporations to say, "With all the money that we've given you in the last 20 years, we want you to spend some of it here and not take the jobs to China or somewhere else"? Do I have to say that? Shouldn't it be automatic that corporations should have a little Ontario and Canadian pride? Where are the Tories and Liberals on this? Why aren't they saying to the corporate sector, "We give you those corporate tax cuts. We expect you to bring those jobs here to this country"? Why aren't you saying that? Why do I have to tell you, day in and day out? Do you need constant reminding? Do you know how tiring that is to have to remind you day in and day out that you've got to get the corporate sector on our side and not taking our money and bringing the jobs somewhere else and then—

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: That's right, Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Of course. The corporate tax cuts do not work. They have never worked.

Since 2000, the combined federal and provincial tax rate was reduced from 44% to 25%—you'll never have a Tory or a Liberal say that—but business investments deteriorated, and they did not invest in productivity, i.e., machinery and equipment. We lag behind in productivity, but we've been cutting corporate taxes for 20 years.

The argument Tories make, or the corporate sector makes—they're one and one, often, with the Liberals right behind—is that if you give corporate tax cuts, they will invest in productivity. But the evidence shows that they're not investing in productivity.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: What evidence?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What evidence? Good Lord. I don't know what you've been reading by way of the corporate media that tells you that the corporate tax cuts have gone into productivity. Bring that to me, because, I'm telling you—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: You bring it to me.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to bring it to you? Oh, no. You are the fine Tories and Liberals who support the corporate tax giveaways with a view that that would create greater productivity, and the evidence from the Globe and Mail that you people read and the National Post the Tories read or Liberals read—the evidence there shows that productivity lags over and over, year after year, vis-à-vis the States and other countries. It lags because those people at the corporate level take the money, have cash reserves, and they do not spend it in creating jobs, and they do not spend it in productivity as a way of creating more efficiency and jobs.

The accumulated cash revenue by 2010, says Stats Canada, or what remains of it—that we have half a trillion dollars in cash reserves—half a trillion. It's a whole lot of money. It's a whole lot of pecunia. We are

in the 500 billions of dollars stashed away, not being invested, neither in productivity nor job creation. Since 2008, \$83 billion has been stashed away in cash savings—83 billion bucks.

So we got half a trillion by 2010 and \$83 billion since 2008. They're just taking the money. God bless. They love taxpayers' money. They love the money of citizens. They want to take it, put it away, stash it, wait for the right moment to go after some other corporate sector that they could gobble up. All of these investments are going into gobbling up other corporations, other companies, making even bigger monsters out of our corporate sectors, with nary a job that's created.

Corporate tax reductions do not trickle down. They never have. The effects of corporate tax reductions are profoundly regressive. They are not distributed to the citizens and to the taxpayers. They are distributed among the big one-percenters who earn in the millions and billions of dollars. God bless.

The people who have got a problem are the individual homeowners. Households are having issues with money, issues with deficits. It's not the corporate sector. They are suffering the financial crunch.

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I remind the Liberals and Tories that we lost 160,000 jobs—or, no; we had 160,000 fewer jobs pre-recession peak, and those jobs have not come back. While some jobs have come back, they are not well-paying, and the majority of workers are working for part-time wages, low wages. I'm always reminding you folks that half of the college teachers are there on a contract basis because they can't get a full-time job. Up to 30% of university professors are on contract because they can't get a full-time job. Most of the people who work are part-time. Many of the people who are working are working at two or three jobs. Many of the people who are working are working for minimum wage. You can't build an honest-to-goodness standard of living and have a good life in this country any more without an improvement in wages.

Tories want to freeze wages, and even though teachers are saying, "We voluntarily freeze our wages for two years," Tories say, "No, it's not good enough. We want to mandate that, because that's the way we Tories want to do it." And Liberals, not to be outdone, say, "Negotiate with the teachers or we'll legislate." Same idea, different language, but it's the same baloney, right? "Negotiate or legislate. You teachers decide." It's the same stuff, except you're trying to be nice in appearances, and they're just cleaner about it.

So we've got to worry, in my mind, about how deficits are affecting homeowners, because if we don't worry about that, our economy is never going to get any better. The average hourly wage has not changed since 1991, and salaries of people since 1991, the 1990s, have stayed more or less the same. We're in trouble. If people don't have money, they can't spend. So when Tories say, "We've got a spending problem. We've got to cut back," what we're cutting back on are the social programs that affect directly those very people whose incomes have been at the same level since 1990.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: But they know all about that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They do. So I offer that to you, Speaker, through you to the others: just a little background, some little historical background that might be of help to the people who are watching this program and to the MPPs who are listening to this debate.

I want to talk about Bill 11.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Finally.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right. How come you didn't make fun of your member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, who for 18 minutes didn't talk about Bill 11? I just thought I would remind you.

This bill, when originally introduced, we thought, "It's supportable, but there are some problems."

Mr. Bill Walker: Why do we need a bill?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You need a bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: Why?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll explain in a minute.

We said that the \$20 million you want to spend is not much, in the scheme of things. That's what you're spending in eastern Ontario—up to—and you want to do the same in western Ontario. That's okay. We said it's not much. It will accomplish some things; better than nothing; but it wasn't a big sum of money, first.

Secondly, the job guarantees are a real concern for us, because we've argued for the last, I don't know, many years that you just can't give money away and not have any job guarantees, and you cannot give money away without a threat by government of a clawback, should you give that money and the jobs do not result. So we've been critical of you in the last many years on this particular score, but you haven't been listening, from what I've been able to glean over the last four or five or six years. So we reminded the government that you've got to have stronger language in the bill to make that a little stronger and clearer.

Thirdly, the southwestern fund is being financed by reallocation from other programs within the Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation, and much of that money comes from the strategic jobs and investment fund. So we said to you, "This strategic jobs and investment fund is a good one."

I'll read the quote that speaks about this program, because I think—for the benefit of Tories—they might like it; I'm not sure. The ministry describes it as the following: "aimed at innovative companies that make anchor investments in Ontario that support cluster development and leading-edge initiatives that build long-term prosperity and global competitiveness." This is good.

China is doing this, day in and day out. They focus on where they want their investments to go and they invest billions strategically in their economy so as to build international strength and international competitiveness. They directly, intentionally, say, "What do we do as a government?", versus the Conservative market ideology that simply says, "Oh, no. Governments shouldn't do that. They should simply let it happen. They should

simply allow the corporate sector to do that on their own"—because you know how bright they are—"and they know exactly what they need to do in the economy, and it will simply happen."

Brothers and sisters of both political persuasions: It doesn't always happen. That's why China effectively intervenes in their economy; Japan as well. They both do it. America dares not go after China because China is a powerful country. They don't want to go after China by saying, "You're affecting our economies here. You're manipulating our economies. We don't want you to do that." America does that with little countries they can control, like Canada and others, but not China. Can't tell China what to do. God bless. That's a good thing.

But it makes an argument for government involvement in finding strategic ways of funding leading-edge investments and thus creating jobs in Ontario. So I say to the government that taking \$20 million from the strategic jobs and investment fund has an equal result in the end. If you left it in the strategic jobs and investment fund, my suspicion is that it would create the same number of jobs. Whether you have a western or an eastern economic development board that deals with these issues might not matter too much. If the money was in addition to the strategic jobs and investment fund, one would argue that it's a little more money, and it will create more jobs, and that's a good thing. But to take it from one pot as an offset, as we say in Italian, doesn't accomplish much. Right? That's the expression. But who am I to tell the Liberals anything around here? They don't listen very much.

Hon. John Milloy: We always listen to you, Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My sense is that you don't listen too often to what we have to say. It's my experience in 22 years.

The fourth critique was that we wanted to have independent boards that are responsible for approving funded projects. This is how it's done in the northern Ontario heritage fund, and we argue that it's a good model.

During the debates, the Liberals didn't support any of these things in second reading. I have to tell you, in committee they didn't support it either. But with alliances with the Conservative Party, we managed to make some changes, and these changes are positive in nature. That tells you what you can accomplish in minority government. This is one of the finest examples of a successful intervention by the opposition parties to impose on the government—because they were reluctant—changes that we believe are going to make this bill better.

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Even though we made these changes, the Tories are still saying they can't support it. I don't know. I don't agree with them. I thank them for their support, but I don't agree with them. But they did agree to making sure that when the minister makes an announcement on monies given by this new fund, this Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act, the opposition members have to be invited to be present at the announcement.

This has not always been the case. Tories and New Democrats argued successfully, by way of an amend-

ment, that the opposition parties had to be present at the announcement. How could Liberals disagree with those things, I say to myself. Why wouldn't they have done it on their own? Why do they need to be nudged by me? Why? I don't know why. It ought to be a given, because, I'd remind you, some day you'll be here, and you'll be complaining. "We're not invited to the announcements. Why?" And the others will say, "Because you did the same," and on and on it goes. That was a simple one, a minor one, and we got it. It makes sure that some partisanship is eliminated.

The other matter: Funds will be housed in independent corporations with boards of directors drawn from the southwestern and eastern Ontario regions. What we have accomplished here is making sure that the politics of the approval process move away from the minister and be put into the hands of an independent board. What could be so wrong with that? We said to the Liberals, "Look, this is good for you, because you don't want to appear to be doing this for political reasons, for which you were attacked in the past." I know. You have been attacked in the past for doing that. So if you have an independent board, it will take out the partisan politics.

The Liberals argued in committee that if we do this, it will become unmanageable; it will become unwieldy; it will become less efficient. I said, "Are you arguing that the northern Ontario heritage fund is inefficient?" No? No Liberal would argue that. But if we have the northern Ontario heritage fund, which functions in this way—it already exists—you have a model by which to be able to put together an independent board for eastern Ontario that deals with economic development, and it will be done quickly, efficiently and responsibly, because you have a model that works. The bureaucracy knows how it works.

The Minister of Northern Development nods in approval: "He's right."

The arguments were specious in committee, to be fair, but because we had the Tories on board, we were able to get that one as well.

We argued that there should be local advisory committees that will represent sub-regions and possibly industry sectors. This is good. Creating local advisory committees to represent the sub-regions is a positive element, a positive addition, a positive amendment that we were able to put into that debate and were successful in.

The other one, that the accountability measures, including job guarantees and more transparency in contracts, be included: We want greater accountability. It should be an easy one to accept by governments. Why wouldn't you want greater accountability? Greater transparency is something you talk about all the time, yet when you're actually confronted with having to do that and it's presented to you by the opposition, you oppose it. But by the mercy of having two opposition parties that had the numbers to determine success of these amendments, we got that one too.

We also argued that there should be a one-year review of the major provisions in the act, to ensure that things are working as expected and to examine possible refine-

ments. To be fair, that amendment was introduced by the Liberals, and it wasn't introduced on the basis of our amendments, initially, but it was introduced on the basis of their bill going through as they had it. So they wanted their bill to be as it was and they had proposed a one-year review of the major provisions of the act. But I think this review is even better with our amendments. So we were able to, as generous as we were, incorporate that amendment as well into Bill 11.

All of these things are improvements that tell the citizens who watch this program and follow it that minority governments, from time to time, work, and that if we are able to do it together, it can work. If Liberal governments who have still a governing position—if they did not resist the opposition parties, as they often do, it would be so much easier. But you just have to give up a little bit of control. You just have to say and acknowledge and accept that you don't have a majority government. When you accept that, as you're beginning to, God bless, things begin to unravel in positive ways. I see that. It's good. I see the government is becoming a little more elastic, recognizing the fragile position that it has in this minority situation. See, minority makes you come to your senses a little bit, eventually. I'm happy about that.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: At least two of the parties.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's sometimes true too; you're quite right.

These are the things we were able to accomplish—and by the way, just as a quick and final comment on—what do you call it?—the Jobs and Prosperity Council that you created, you have recognized what our leader has been saying for quite some time; that is, that we need to attach job security, job improvements, to the corporate tax cuts that we give. They have to be one and the same.

New Democrats, unlike Conservatives, say that if we support corporations that create jobs, that is a positive thing. But to give money away willy-nilly, as both Liberals and Tories have done for the last 20 years, is a mistake. But if we say to the corporations, "You are creating jobs for the long term," this is good. That's what we want; that's what people want: job creation. The government has relented a little bit and said, "We will take your suggestions and make sure that the people who are setting up the Jobs and Prosperity Council will look into those suggestions." Do I think that we are together on that? I don't know, but at least they will be given consideration. We would have hoped for a little more detail on this, but we don't know.

You see, our program works. We know from Winnipeg how that works. Because what we have proposed is that it should be a two-year refundable job creator tax credit that would be administered through the existing corporate income tax system. It would reimburse employers for 10% of the salary paid to a new hire during their first year of employment, up to a maximum of \$5,000. To demonstrate that the new hire is an additional job rather than a replacement for a previous employee, each employer would be required to submit workforce baseline numbers and wage bill information annually. To

calculate the credit, workforce employment numbers would be compared year to year, and employers would also have to submit information that indicates the total wage bill of new employees hired. Employers would not be eligible for a credit for increasing wages of existing employees.

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To create over 50,000 jobs, \$250 million of the \$2-billion jobs and prosperity fund would be allocated to the tax credit. You see, this one is the one that we have not been able to persuade the government to do. We think that two billion bucks could be reallocated in a way that, if we gave \$250 million in the way that we described, it would create the 50,000 jobs.

We New Democrats are open to discussion about ways to ensure that no single employer monopolizes the program, such as capping the total credits per employer.

We offer these suggestions as a way of doing real economic development in the province. We hope that a minority government will persuade Liberals to do things a little differently; we hope that it persuades them to listen to some of the suggestions that we have so as to benefit citizens in particular, households that are struggling to make ends meet; and we are hoping that this bill will go through.

I know that the Liberals are asking the Tories whether they're going to support this. I understand. But I think we should be able to do this together. I think Liberals and New Democrats can do this together. If the Tories don't want to join us, I think it's a problem, but we can do it. The eastern economic development fund worked for eastern Ontario. The Conservative member and members of that region support the program. They know that it has helped them as well. Yes, some of it was politically partisan; there's no doubt about it. That's why we want to make this less partisan. That's why we want to create an independent board in western Ontario.

But the program has worked in eastern Ontario and it can work in western Ontario. With the changes that we have made, Conservatives and New Democrats, it allows us the opportunity to accomplish what we want. That's why I say that there's absolutely no reason for the Tories to oppose this. If you believe corporate tax cuts are not corporate welfare but you think that tax grants are, you've got a contradiction to deal with. You've got to be able to deal with them, got to be able to see that one and the other are part of the same problem. You can't have it both ways, and at the moment, Tories want it both ways. It used to be that the Liberals always wanted it both ways; now it seems the Tories want it both ways. I don't get it.

We can do this. I think we should be able to pass Bill 11 and demonstrate to people that the amendments that New Democrats made, with the help of the Conservatives, will work more effectively, more efficiently and better for the municipalities, non-profits, the private sector that's in those regions, and the citizens in particular.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the member about Bill 11, something that's important for Ottawa-Orléans. In Ottawa-Orléans, we have about 0.5 jobs per household, where Kanata has something like 1.6 jobs per household. Jobs are very important.

I had a brief experience with the eastern Ontario development fund. Even though Ottawa-Orléans was not within that area, I was able to speak at a couple of presentations of cheques. I don't mind; I agree with the member that it is nice that the MPP of the riding is going to be at the announcement. I think that's important. We're all trying to create jobs in Ontario.

The EODF was very positive. There are really good results. We weren't putting in big dollars; I think the average was that 11% of the dollars that went in were provincial, so there had to be a really good plan there. What they were looking at were winners that had good ideas that could move forward and get them in place. I ran a business for 35 years. We had some good ideas and some things to do, but it was always that you're risking your own money. You were making good money in your business, but to risk new money to create jobs—the incentive was never there. This puts that incentive there to create jobs for people that are winners, that know how to run companies, that are providing jobs and that want to provide more.

I think that certainly the experience of the fund in eastern Ontario—it was a good program. Only two of the 113 projects were not successful. That's a 98% success rate. They were good projects. You only had to go to the projects and see them under way to know that we were doing right thing.

There's many other things that could be done. There are improvements that may have been brought in your case. This is a good program. I'm glad to see it go into southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario, including Ottawa-Orléans.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Elgin-Middlesex-London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to comment on the words spoken by the member from Trinity-Spadina. It was great. We heard NDP philosophy. We heard, "Let's beat up the federal government." We heard about the 1% and 99%. We heard about cutting social programs, which is in this budget that they're supporting. So I don't know where he is on that.

I take exception to the point that he's vilifying corporations. They like to paint this picture that corporations are these great big hulking menaces that employ hundreds of thousands around the world. My business is a corporation; I'm incorporated and I employ 60 people. I can't think there's one making minimum wage, and 100% of the money that we make in our pharmacy stays in Canada, stays in Ontario and stays in our riding. So let's be fair to corporations across Ontario. A lot of small businesses are corporations. You can't vilify them, because they're what's going to bring the economy back.

Just a few comments on Bill 11, I guess proportionate to the time of the hour that he took. Basically, let's stop the spin. There's no money for this program. Tax cuts will benefit everybody, instead of a few. You don't really need the legislation to have the southwest fund. You didn't do it for the eastern fund. If you really wanted to get it out, you would have done it back in November. We need to get government out of the way of businesses and let them create the jobs and get our economy rolling back. Thank you for your words.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to stand and speak on behalf of the riding of Davenport in Toronto.

For the viewers at home, it's almost 10 after 3 now on June 11, 2012, which is noteworthy, as my colleague pointed out. Because it's 2012, and as my colleague from Trinity-Spadina was saying, it has been almost 20 years—more than 20 years—with the exact same strategy here from both the Liberals and Conservatives, the strategy of cutting taxes for the biggest corporations.

We see that in this province things have not gotten better. We have not attracted investment. We have worse social programs than 20 years ago and we don't have the resources to pay for them. That's why I think we desperately need a jobs strategy. There's no doubt about that. We need to put people back to work in this province, but we can't continue down the same path that we've been going in. We need Bill 11. We need to bring it to committee. We need to make this Parliament work.

I think that Bill 11 would be greatly improved with the support of the NDP. We have brought some ideas forward. We believe that we should support folks who are actually going to create a job in this province; we shouldn't just allow people to give away tax dollars and move their companies abroad. I think that's a sensible idea. That's a balanced approach and something that this Parliament desperately needs.

What we've seen from the government's perspective is a job creation strategy that's like this: You build a gas-powered plant, and then you tear it down. That creates, in the minds of the government, maybe, twice as many jobs. You build a diesel train in my riding only to tear it down in favour of an electric train. Again, that's the idea of creating a job. You lure away an opposite member of Parliament and give them a job with WSIB. That creates one full-time job.

This is not the approach that works for this province. We need a reasonable approach that's going to support people who actually create jobs in Ontario. I would encourage that we pass this, we bring it to committee and we allow some reasonable, sensible folks here—

Interjection.

Mr. Jonah Schein: To pass it, but to amend it to make it work and make sure that we can put people back to work in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

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Mr. Grant Crack: It's a pleasure again to rise. I know that the member from Trinity-Spadina is receiving a lot of attention here, but I'd just like to point out one of the points that he made with reference to economic development in Ontario being very important and that it's important that the government also supports economic development.

It boggles my mind, Speaker, when I hear members of the opposition criticize our initiatives, our government policies when it comes to job creation, but at the same time, as the member from Trinity-Spadina said, these members should be there in attendance at any future announcements. I just can't understand how you would want to attend an event with a fund supporting a business in your local community when you don't support it yourself. I'm not that kind of politician. I'm going to support this bill. I think it's great.

We listened to our Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. They made it clear they wanted a job creation program. We expanded it into southwest Ontario, and I know that the mayors in those regions are going to enjoy the benefits of seeing their residents employed.

I'd like to say that that \$53.5 million has leveraged \$493 million in investment. That's an 8 to 1 ratio in creating or retaining jobs in eastern Ontario. That's 12,000 jobs. The fund is equally spread out to support over 13 sectors and 13 counties across eastern Ontario. I think that is fairly significant.

So, in closing, I'm glad that this is coming forward. It's about time. We need to get our people back to work. We need to support our manufacturing sectors. We need to support smaller business as well. I look forward to seeing third reading and passage of this bill tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Trinity-Spadina, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I thank all the speakers.

I just want to comment to my friend from Elgin-Middlesex-London. I don't know: Did I vilify the corporations? I don't think I did that. All I'm saying is that we have been giving them corporate tax cuts for the last 20 years, and instead of investing in creating jobs or in productivity, they simply sack away the dollars and just wait for an opportune moment. Did I vilify them? I'm just saying, when we help them in the way that we have been doing, please, help create jobs.

Don't tell me you're incorporated too and all the others are incorporated. I understand that. You know how many of my constituents want to incorporate so they can get a tax break? So many individuals say, "I want to incorporate too so I can get my tax benefit." "What about me?" they're saying.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is that legal?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's legal. We should all incorporate and we should all get a tax break.

Anyway, I wasn't vilifying the corporations. All I'm saying is, there should be corporate pride in Canada and in Ontario. When they get a tax break, they should feel honour-bound to create jobs in this province. Is that vilifying them? No. It's saying they should be good corporate citizens who have a responsibility to the people of Ontario and Canada. When we give them tax breaks, which we have been doing for so long, and we don't see the jobs, then we have to question our policies and we have to question the private sector.

When the member from Elgin-Middlesex says there's no money for this program, the money's already there. It's just been offset. It's been taken from one to the other. But if it helps some people, that's okay. We had members from Durham and Muskoka-Haliburton saying, "Where's our share?" And they don't vote NDP. Most of them are Conservatives up there. I happen to agree with them. But they weren't, obviously, part of this—they were outside of the boundary, so we couldn't help them. Too bad.

This is a nice initiative. We should support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mario Sergio): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm really delighted to be here this afternoon to speak at third reading debate on Bill 11.

Just to give a bit of background—I wish there were some more members from eastern Ontario here in the House this afternoon, because I could give you a detailed background on how the eastern Ontario development fund got established. For many years, economic development officers in eastern Ontario, and indeed the wardens in eastern Ontario, would be attending AMO meetings with their colleagues, particularly from northern Ontario. When they attended those AMO meetings, they would hear at length the value of the northern Ontario heritage fund. That fund, set up with a board of directors, was established several governments ago—

Mr. Bill Mauro: David Peterson.

Mr. Jeff Leal: —by David Peterson, my friend from Thunder Bay-Atikokan tells me—to make a separate board, an arm's-length board, to make strategic investments into business entities and activities in northern Ontario. As I said, for the longest time, my colleagues in eastern Ontario were looking at that, economic development officers, and they said, "Let's look at the creation of such a fund in eastern Ontario."

Prior to the 2007 election, my former colleague Lou Rinaldi, the member from Northumberland-Quinte West, convened a meeting of the wardens in eastern Ontario and, indeed, all the economic development officers in eastern Ontario, to come up with a platform plank, a policy. That is the genesis of the eastern Ontario development fund. It had input from the grassroots, so this was a grassroots initiative to make the EODF come alive, part of our platform commitment in 2007, which we then brought into being after the election of 2007. A number of people in an elected capacity, and indeed, develop-

ment officers, and Mr. Rinaldi himself, deserve a tremendous amount of credit for moving this forward.

My warden of Peterborough county is the past chair of the eastern Ontario wardens' conference, J. Murray Jones, who is also the mayor of the wonderful municipality, the township of Douro-Dummer. In fact, I was in his municipality just yesterday for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the ordination of Father Bernard Heffernan. Warden Jones and I had a great discussion yesterday. His first question to me was, after we concluded the celebration, "Jeff, where is Bill 11? I and my colleagues in eastern Ontario want Bill 11 passed."

I said, "Mr. Warden, I'll have the privilege of speaking to this bill on Monday. We're looking forward to that kind of comradeship from the official opposition, and indeed the third party, to see if we can get Bill 11 established."

One might ask, why do we want the EODF enshrined in legislation? This was the request of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, who want to see this legislation enshrined so that somewhere down the line, in the future, if the government of the day wanted to change the EODF, they would have to come back to the House to get those changes made, which I think is a great idea.

We have been extremely successful in the riding of Peterborough with EODF funding, and I just want to go through a list here this afternoon, because these are all exemplary, well-run, well-managed, innovative companies.

First of all, I want to talk about Stickling's Bakery. Stickling's Bakery is a very innovative organization. They've brought new machinery and new processes, and developed a variety of baked products that they distribute. They have niche markets all across the province of Ontario. They were able to use the EODF grant money to buy new equipment, to make sure that they could exploit these new niche markets right across the province of Ontario for unique baked goods. I invite anybody coming to the Peterborough area to drop by the Stickling's store and sample some of their wonderful products.

The next one I want to talk about is Safran Electronics. Safran Electronics is a multinational company with a branch located in Peterborough. They're part of the wider Safran umbrella. They also used their EODF grant money to purchase new machinery, again for innovative processes. Most members of this House would be familiar with the black boxes that are in all of our large commercial planes that fly internationally. Safran builds the majority of the component parts that are in those black boxes and that, of course, are used by all the major aircraft manufacturers throughout the world. Indeed, through the money they got through EODF, they developed the technology for the second generation of black boxes that are used by aviation companies throughout the world.

Another company that I'm very proud of and that received money through the EODF is Central Smith ice cream. They're located on the road between Fowlers Corners and Bridgenorth, Ontario.

They're very involved in manufacturing ice cream for commercial and industrial users. For example, members would be familiar—seeing Sysco Food Services trucks on our highways. Central Smith produces the ice cream that is purchased by the Sysco food group and the Gordon food group and then provided for institutional users right across the province of Ontario—indeed, a company that used EODF money for innovation, again, to further their market reach and create new jobs.

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The next one that received two grants under the EODF—McCloskey Brothers. McCloskey Brothers is a very interesting company. They're located on Highway 28 in the eastern part of Peterborough. They build trommel equipment that is used by the mining industry, by the aggregate industry. In fact, the money they got through the EODF allowed them to buy new equipment and to actually repatriate work that was formerly being done in Ireland, bringing that back to Ontario and using Ontario as their export platform for markets right around the world. That's so important.

The next company I want to talk about is Drain Brothers. Drain Brothers is a family-owned company, headquartered in Norwood, Ontario, again in the eastern part of Peterborough riding. Drain Brothers are in the aggregate business, and just recently, through the EODF grant money, they bought new technology to be used in processing aggregate. They've entered into a partnership with Iko. Many members of this House will know that Iko is probably one of the largest manufacturers of roofing products, shingles, in the world. They are using the aggregate that's being processed by Drain Brothers in Havelock, Ontario, to produce for Iko a new brand of shingle that has a longer shelf life. Most of us know that we replace a roof every 15, 20, 25 years, but with this new aggregate that they're mining in Havelock, Ontario—put through the processes, through the technology they have there, and then shipped to Iko, which has an operation in Marlborough, Ontario, I believe. It is then put into shingles which are exported right around the world.

The next company I want to talk about that received EODF grant money is Siemens. Many members of this House will know about Siemens. It's a multinational company. We're very pleased that they employ 400 people in manufacturing in my riding. Peterborough is their centre for the manufacture of water and waste water treatment technology. They also have a training centre at their location in Peterborough where they bring municipal staff from all over Canada. Those municipalities that purchase Siemens equipment for water and waste water treatment bring them all to Peterborough to do the training on Siemens equipment. It has been a great partnership. It's one of the most dynamic manufacturing centres that I've witnessed in a long, long time. I invite members opposite to make the trip to Peterborough. I'd love to take them to Siemens, because one of the areas that we all know that Ontario has great expertise in is in the area of water and waste water treatment systems,

allowing us to use the opportunities in Peterborough as an export platform.

Next, I want to get to Flying Colours. Flying Colours is a very interesting company. My friend the member from York Centre, Mr. Kwinter, is very familiar with Flying Colours. Over the years, the member from York Centre has been involved in the entities that own Flying Colours in a very positive way. Just to give you the Reader's Digest version, Mr. Speaker, Flying Colours takes executive jets, whether brand new executive jets from Bombardier—or they refurbish used executive jets. They have an operation in Peterborough and an operation in St. Louis, Missouri. What they do, on an international basis, is they take brand new Bombardier executive jets and retrofit them, reconfigure them to client needs, or they take executive jets that have a few miles on them, bring them to Peterborough, and again they're refitted for new uses. The last time I was down at Flying Colours, a short time ago, they were doing a new Bombardier jet for the head of the Bank of China. It was a \$14-million retrofit of an executive jet. They were also, at the same time, doing an executive jet for one of the leading financial institutions from India—again, a \$14-million retrofit. So \$28 million in two jets done right in Peterborough. The EODF allowed Flying Colours to acquire the technology needed to make that happen.

We also have a couple of other EODF grants pending for companies in the not-too-distant future, so we look forward to doing those.

Mr. Speaker, I have a speech here. I want to make reference to it, if I can grab it; just bear with me for a moment. It was a speech that was delivered a short time ago by Mark Carney, the governor of the Bank of Canada. He actually delivered it in Waterloo on April 2, 2012. It was the 100th anniversary of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce. One of the things that he commented on—and I just want to make reference to his speech, because I think it's relevant to the investments we're making through the EODF to enhance competitiveness and to allow companies to export further.

He said, "As I alluded to earlier, among the most striking features of the recent Canadian recession was the performance of exports.

"During the most intense phase of the great recession—a nine-month period beginning in the fall of 2008—the level of Canadian exports plunged more than 16%, or more than twice the total drop during the previous two" recessionary "cycles. By the end of last year, exports still remained roughly 8% below their pre-recession peak."

He goes on in the speech to talk about why we need here in Ontario, on a strategic basis, to invest in those companies, to acquire that new machinery, to improve their productivity and take advantage of export markets.

He goes on to say that one of the structural weaknesses not only of Ontario but of Canada, of course, is our significant dependence on the United States. In his speech, he goes to great lengths to say that even though

the United States is on the road to recovery, their full capacity, in terms of recovery, is going to be less than other recoveries, as we have gone through other recessionary cycles in the past. What he is saying, in a nutshell, is that we have to take every opportunity here in Ontario and Canada to make sure that we work with our businesses so they're prepared to have export-oriented products and diversify our trade as much as possible away from the United States.

He said that where Canada and Ontario need to be is to get into export markets that are some of the fastest-growing in the world. Obviously, he talks about China and India, but he goes on at great lengths to describe the emerging markets such as Chile, Argentina and Brazil. He says it's critically important, with the technology and products that Ontario and Canada have to offer, to make sure that we become major players in those particular markets.

He goes on to say in his speech that what Ontario manufacturers need to do is retool as quickly as possible, and I can't think of a better way, through the southwestern Ontario development fund and indeed the eastern Ontario development fund, to make those key investments into areas to allow our manufacturers to retool as quickly as possible, to improve their productivity and to make sure that they continue to be very, very productive.

To date, I just want to look at the success, a quick reference, of the eastern Ontario development fund. Some 113 products have been approved of 132 applications, an application success rate of over 86%. Mr. Speaker, when I was in elementary, secondary and university, 86% would be a great passing grade, and I think you would also concede that point in terms of a wonderful passing grade.

Only two of the 113 projects have not been successful: a program success rate of over 98%. Some \$53.5 million has leveraged over \$493 million, an investment ratio of eight to one, creating or retaining over 12,000 jobs in eastern Ontario and critical jobs right in the riding of Peterborough.

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This fund has spread over and has the support of over 13 sectors in 13 counties across eastern Ontario. Indeed, we even asked a third party. I always believe there's great merit in asking a third party to look at government programs. KPMG, one of the most widely respected international accounting firms, indicated that the eastern Ontario development fund is exceeding job growth targets and that those are sustainable jobs and not just project-related. There we go: We have a third party. KPMG has come in, they've looked at the eastern Ontario development fund and they've indicated that it is given a five-star rating in terms of a government program. I certainly concur with what KPMG has said about the eastern Ontario development fund.

As I said, I've talked extensively with economic development officers in the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. They're telling everybody, "You talk to your friends across the aisle." I always talk to my friends

across the aisle. I believe in reaching across the aisle to have a consensus on any given day so we can move Ontario forward together, which I think is the way to go.

I think that the southwestern Ontario development fund and the eastern Ontario development fund are examples of strategically designed programs, approaches, that will certainly make a difference. I know we have a programming motion in place, but I'm hoping we can add Bill 11. This would be a great passage of a bill. I know it would be well received by my friends in the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. It would be well received by development officers in eastern Ontario. They want us to get on with this bill. They want it to get in place to help those businesses that need this help so we can indeed move forward together.

We should all take an opportunity. I could mention companies in Port Hope, in Cobourg, in Belleville, in Kingston, in Alexandria—you name it. Every community in the 13 counties in eastern Ontario have been helped by EODF. It's very important. Last Wednesday, I had the opportunity to chat with a former member from eastern Ontario, a good friend of us all: Norm Sterling. I know that if Norm were in this House this afternoon, he would be standing in his place and being one of the number one cheerleaders for getting the EODF enshrined. After almost 35 years in this House, I think Norm's philosophy should be echoed here today and that we should get on with the passage of this bill.

Our other good friend, Mr. Speaker—you know him well. He's now in the red chamber in Ottawa: Senator Bob Runciman. I know that Bob was a champion out of Brockville, Ontario, for great things like the EODF. If he were with us today—I know he's with us today in spirit—he would be standing up to say, "Look, folks, we've got to get the EODF enshrined." I know he would say it. I'd love to call him in Ottawa today. I don't have his phone number, but I know he's with us.

I think we all have to get together. This is a great bill. We've got to get it passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague from across the floor from Peterborough.

A couple of points I'd just like to raise, having listened to the debate from both Mr. Marchese from my NDP colleagues to the left and Mr. Leal: If a business has a viable idea, why can they not go to a bank that is established to actually lend funds? It happens all over the world, I'm told. Why do they feel that they have to come back to the government to always ask for money from the government and the general taxpayer to fund something? If it's a viable, feasible, sound business plan, that's the whole spirit of entrepreneurialism. That's what our country and our province was founded on.

Why do we need grants, Mr. Speaker? We have created an environment whereby it is expected that grants are the only way certain businesses will grow. That's not the environment we need. That's not the way we need to move forward, Mr. Speaker.

Our party fundamentally believes it's our job to set the framework to provide a good environment for businesses to thrive and grow, and get out of the way. We have private lending institutions that are quite happy to go out and lend money to viable, productive businesses. That's where they should be going, particularly in a case when we're in debt—\$15 billion just this year and moving towards \$411 billion.

If the party opposite would put as much effort into getting the red tape, the bureaucracy, out of the way, we would be further ahead. I have a number of businesses in my constituency that are saying, "They're going to put me out of business." I'm bringing issues forward every day that are impeding their ability to do their job and keep their people employed.

I hear nothing about it in this House, and yet we're spending time in a bill that, in my mind, doesn't even need to be here. When they did the eastern Ontario development fund—before my time—I'm told they did it without creating a bill. They just put it through, and everybody everyone accepted it and said, fine, there it goes.

This is nothing more than a wedge tactic. It's gamesmanship. Our province is in serious fiscal challenges. We cannot accept it. We need to create jobs. We need to cut spending. We need to reduce the deficit. This bill will not do any of that, and therefore we will not support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Just as an argument to make against the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—

Mr. Bill Walker: Now, be nice.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, because your point is, if you've got a good idea, it's viable, it's feasible, blah, blah, then you go to the bank and get your money. That's the way you made the argument. The problem is that banks are not lending to small business as much as they should. So some small businesses get some support, but banks have been very risk-averse for quite a long time. So good ideas, viable ideas, feasible ideas haven't been working. I'm waiting for a Conservative initiative that says, how do we make the banks give more support to those who are creating the jobs?

Until we do that, we as a government have a role to play in giving out grants and loans. The southwestern development fund will have a loan component, not just grants, so we need that. It will also involve the non-profit sector, including cities and not just private sector folks. It has been expanded somewhat.

But I have a question for the member from Peterborough. You didn't once mention the amendments the NDP made. Do you like them? Do you support them? Do you like the idea of making sure that funding announcements become less partisan and guarantee that the local MPPs get invited? Did you support the idea of setting up an independent corporation with a board of directors drawn from the southwestern and eastern Ontario regions, where they are the ones that make the decision, as opposed to the minister and/or someone connected to

the minister that makes those decisions? Do you support the idea of local advisory committees? Do you support greater accountability measures that we put in the bill? It would be good if you spoke to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Peterborough for his great remarks.

I do also want to mention to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound the same argument that was just made against what you said. Do you think the banks will lend money to everybody? You should come up to northern Ontario and see what happens when a small business person tries to get money from the banks. It very clearly articulates the needs for these funds because you, I must say with respect, simply don't understand the reality in northern Ontario.

Now, Speaker, the best example I can give you of why funds are important and why they work is the northern Ontario heritage fund, a fund established by a Liberal government in the late 1980s, which, unfortunately, had morphed into being used for different things under a previous administration. We took the money, we re-oriented the programming, and we have been supporting many small, private businesses in northern Ontario now, private sector investment, private sector job creation for one of the very fundamental reasons: that it's hard for these businesses to get access to capital. Many of them are very, very successful. I can give an example like the member from Peterborough did: One company in my riding, Actlabs, received northern Ontario heritage fund money. When we stepped in to help them, they were in the teens, a very relatively small company. That business in Thunder Bay now is employing somewhere between 100 and 150 people, doing mining-related work. They got their seed money from the northern Ontario heritage fund. They started, but we supported it.

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We're not picking winners and losers. There's a board of directors that makes the choice, and then Deloitte and Touche steps in and does a third party review on their business case to make sure they are sustainable and they're going to make it. So this isn't about the government picking winners and losers. This is about a very, very supportable, accommodating use of taxpayers' money to create private sector jobs in northern Ontario.

I would suspect that the EODF that's being referenced by my good friend from Peterborough here today will be just as successful as the northern Ontario heritage fund in Thunder Bay and northern Ontario, which we've increased from \$60 million to \$100 million annually.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's interesting to hear the member opposite from Peterborough talk about 2007. I sat on the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus in 2006, when Bob Sweet, our former chair, requested the government to come out, through much lobbying. We spent a significant amount of feed money from the 14 counties to do the

studies that showed the reason for this fund that was for eastern Ontario. It was put in place without legislation, as was said here.

This is just turning this into politics. We're talking about an area where the assessment is less than half of what it is in western Ontario. We're talking about the reason why they needed help in eastern Ontario. Now you're taking this money and you're taking it away from the reason why it was placed there.

Again, it's strictly for politics, because this fund was created without legislation. It was put in place because of pressure the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus put on the government. From that time, it certainly wasn't an initiative of the government. Actually, at ROMA that year the government was embarrassed by the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. They'd put a lot of pressure because they were looking at cutting back some of the funding.

To look back just over the last month, they take much credit for this fund. In fact, on May 2, they took credit for the Canadian Bio Pellet plant that was so successful under this plan. But in actual fact, the plant never occurred. The funding never went to them. So I just wonder about some of the other successes they're talking about. This is a project that actually didn't happen.

If you go back to the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, they met with us this year during ROMA. They're still talking about the need for help in eastern Ontario. I wish this government would stop playing politics and go back to helping the people in Ontario that need it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Peterborough for his reply.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I certainly appreciated the comments from the members for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Trinity-Spadina, Thunder Bay-Atikokan and Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

To my friend from Trinity-Spadina, yes, I support the bill as amended. I think the amendments make it a much better, much more transparent and stronger bill.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. If I'm in a riding that's held by an opposition member, I always make sure that the opposition member is called to be there. That is the appropriate, polite and civil thing to do. In fact, about a month ago, I had a tourism announcement with my good friend from Prince Edward-Hastings. I made sure that when I arrived I sought out the member for Prince Edward-Hastings to make sure he was standing right beside me on the platform. Indeed, when I finished my comments, I made reference to the member from Prince Edward-Hastings to make sure that he got the opportunity to speak. It was a great day in Stirling, Ontario—the home of Rob Ray, by the way, a famous National Hockey League player.

That is the standard that I live by.

Interestingly enough, the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry is trying to rewrite history a little bit here. I always tell people, "You shouldn't try to

rewrite history when people who were part of that history are still alive to provide witness to that history." He is stretching it a bit here. I was at those meetings to create the EODF. I know exactly what the eastern Ontario wardens said, because my former warden was chair of the eastern Ontario wardens' conference. I know exactly what J. Murray Jones said, and it's not quite the same story that my good friend from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry shared with us this afternoon. But I'll get another moment in the future to talk about that.

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus wants this legislation enshrined. It needs to be done. Let's vote for Bill 11.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to address this third reading of Bill 11. To be clear to the folks here today and to those perhaps watching from home, I'll be voting against this bill. But I'm glad to have the opportunity to state my reasonings for voting against it, as I have many times before, because my constituents deserve to know why, as do the families of Ontario.

I think it's clear by the mere introduction of this bill that the government has lost the plot on the problems facing Ontario. I've said it before many times and I'll say it again here: The days of the Premier and his finance minister simply throwing money at Ontario's challenges are over. Quite frankly, it never should have gotten this far. They promised no tax hikes, but tax hikes are exactly what we got year after year. They promised a plan for eliminating the deficit, yet they offer up a budget that increases spending in over half of the government's ministries and keeps us on a path to a \$30-billion deficit. They promised to protect Ontario families from labour strikes in the classroom and the waiting room, vilifying the other parties in the process, yet their ineptitude has led to gridlock and rising emotions on both fronts. So when this government says that Bill 11 will create jobs across Ontario only if we shove millions more in taxpayers' dollars out the door, I'm not inclined to take their word for it.

Consider this: Would you buy a car strictly based on colour, ignoring all the key attributes that make that car run? The answer, I suspect, is no. I certainly wouldn't, and I don't think the folks back in Chatham-Kent-Essex would either. Instead, would you base your decision on the things that matter most, the things that lead to the results you seek, things like the ability to purchase? Can I afford this car right now? How will this affect my finances three, five and 10 years from now? What's under the hood? Is this car actually going to get me from point A to point B? Am I getting value for what I'm paying? Does it have a safety guarantee? Am I buying it from a reputable dealership?

Here we have a bill introduced by the member from Scarborough Centre. On the surface, sure, it looks great—a southwest economic development fund that will deliver tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars. The Liberal government has positioned it as a saving grace for

southwestern Ontario, with the money flowing into Chatham-Kent-Essex, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Sarnia-Lambton, Elgin-Middlesex-London and even Perth-Wellington. But the fact is, all this government is selling is the colour of the car without even looking under the hood. If they were being honest with the people of Ontario, they would admit that they've put our province on a bumpy road, and what's under the hood is crucial, more now than ever before.

First, let's consider the affordability and our ability to hand out money. The Liberal government has more than doubled our provincial debt. They are on their way to tripling it. It took 23 Premiers and 136 years to build our first debt load. Even after increasing the number twofold, this government wants us to believe that they're competent money managers. Well, we on this side of the House pride ourselves on being the wallet watchers on behalf of Ontario families. This government, on the other hand, is set to give away \$20 million every year in the hopes that it will show dividends. It's a direction without a plan, but I'll get to that in just a moment.

I'd like to know how this government can justify putting us on a path to a \$411-billion debt, yet refuse to turn off the taps. Make no mistake about this: This bill would promote \$80 million in new spending—I'll repeat that—\$80 million in new spending at a time when Ontario's fiscal instability has prompted job losses as we've seen across the province. But let's take a deeper look at the bill.

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I sincerely hope that the member from Scarborough Centre is watching my presentation from home, because he's not here today. I also hope that our local municipal leaders in southwestern Ontario, some who I know support this bill, are watching, because I want to make this case to them as well. Gentlemen, as deputy labour critic, I hold your opinions in the highest regard, but I do not support them. I was born and raised in southwestern Ontario. I believe, as many others do, that there's a better way to get our communities back on their feet, other than by throwing more money at the problem.

I've been working hard to represent my riding amongst the business leaders I interact with every day at Queen's Park. Chatham-Kent-Essex is still home to some of the hardest-working people in the nation. I believe we can attract companies to come back to our area and set the proper conditions for success for home-grown businesses, but I don't believe handing out money at a time when we can't afford it, at a time when the bank is empty, is the right move. I say this coming from a riding that has been particularly hit hard.

I don't need the finance minister to stand across the aisle and tell me how Chatham-Kent is hurting. I'm there every chance I get, meeting the folks at my constituency office and talking to small business owners who have seen Ontario decline more rapidly over the last eight years than ever before in their lifetime.

This government allowed over 300,000 manufacturing jobs to evaporate in Ontario. I can't tell you how badly

my riding was hit when that happened. While this government spent the province into oblivion, Chatham-Kent-Essex has lost over 10,000 jobs since 2003—incidentally, the year this government came to power.

I need this government to understand what has happened to my riding while they were busy throwing taxpayer dollars into the wind. I'm going to remind them of some of the businesses that have closed since they took over: Navistar, KS Centoco, Oxford Automotive, Fleetwood Metal, OES in Blenheim, Energy Automotive, Siemens VDO, ArvinMeritor, Daymond Aluminum, Southwest Regional Centre, Great Lakes Fish in Wheatley, Penske Logistics—and the list continues. Over 150 businesses have closed since 2003.

Our first priority should be setting the conditions for success, not throwing money at our problems. We must push for lower taxes on our businesses, at rates that allow them to reinvest in their businesses, and not fork over weighty cheques to subsidize the government's appetite for spending.

We must push for more affordable energy pricing, not levy thousands of dollars in global adjustment fees for manufacturing plants that employ hundreds. We've seen the devastation that approach has certainly had in northern Ontario, and we don't want it in southern Ontario, too.

We need to get our government out of the day-to-day operations of running a business. That concept may sound foreign to the members on the opposite side of the House, but business owners understand that that means getting crippling red tape under control. Nearly 400,000 pieces of regulation exist in this province, and there is no plan to deal with it in a way that makes sense for business.

That is what we've been doing; that's what I've been doing. It's playing the long game. Is it playing the long game? My answer to that is yes, it is. Does it forgo expensive, short-term, unstable solutions in favour of rebuilding our economy for the next generation? Yes, it does. I will not apologize for refusing to support a do-nothing bill that simply throws away tens of millions of dollars that we don't have in favour of a plan that provides absolutely no guarantee of success.

The members opposite have delighted in using Bill 11 to make myself and my colleagues appear out of touch. But the truth is, this Liberal government is nowhere to be found when it comes time to deliver the goods and actually explain how their scheme is going to work.

For example, what are the boundaries of the development fund? Given that the vast majority of the funds for the similar eastern Ontario development fund found their way into Liberal-friendly ridings, I'm not entirely confident that the families of southwestern Ontario are going to get the results they're paying for. My best guess: Everything west of Toronto, including Niagara Falls and Hamilton, through to Windsor, will encompass the boundaries of the southwest economic development fund. So, no established boundaries yet. I guess we'll just have to wait and see, until it comes time to write the cheque.

There's been no criteria established as to how businesses will be selected for funding. What must their business plan include? How many stable, permanent jobs do they anticipate? Given this government's failure to prop up WindTronics in Windsor at a taxpayer cost of \$2.7 million, I don't trust them to make the savvy business decisions necessary to bring growth to southwestern Ontario once more. I feel like the folks at WindTronics, who were promised a bright future by this government only to be met with Liberal excuses when their jobs evaporated. How many more broken promises must we accept before we get an admission from this government that their plans aren't working.

Look, I have a saying that has been heard in this Legislature several times over the past several months: "When you mess up, fess up." Your plans have messed up.

There's no solid criteria for how much each company would receive, either. What percentage of investment must be made available in order for a successful business? Given this government's reluctance to consider proper consultations on any file, I don't suspect the disbursement of money will be performed with respect for the taxpayer in mind.

Finally, government, please, show us the criteria for accountability. This is perhaps the most troubling omission of all, that a government in the middle of a fiasco at Ornge, which some experts estimate could be a billion-dollar scandal, could ask Ontarians to fork over tens of millions without any guarantee of best practices is simply astounding to me. What I don't want is to be here in the fall asking the Minister of Economic Development to resign because he couldn't follow the money that was being squandered to Liberal insiders. I don't think he wants that either. That's why we have asked, over and over, for details. Don't sell us the colour of the car; show us what's under the hood.

Ontario families and workers are tired. They're tired of their government having to be reminded that it's tax dollars they're playing with, not free money. They're tired of placing their hope in a Liberal government to responsibly disburse funds as they're needed, only to watch millions be thrown out the window in yet another scandal, yet another lawsuit.

I say to the member from Scarborough Centre, I've worked in the private business sector for over 40 years. I've run a successful training and development company on my own. I know that businesses want a hand up, not a handout.

A few months ago, I spoke in the House about the importance of determining between a want and a need. This government has increased spending by \$20 billion since the recession, and almost \$2 billion since this do-nothing budget was tabled. So forgive me if I assume that the lessons about wants and needs, which we have been trying every day to make them understand, have been ignored.

The Liberal government has had every opportunity, not just this year but over eight years, to implement the

changes that would have helped lift up southwestern Ontario. The workers are strong and ready to hit the ground running, the business owners are experts at creating jobs and keeping money in the community, but what holds them back is this government's refusal to bring forward any proposal that doesn't involve spending taxpayers' money in massive amounts. I would call it inaction, but sadly, it's action of the worst kind. Speaker, it's reckless, costly and ultimately doomed to fail. Meanwhile, southern Ontario waits.

They've sent a message to this government in the last election to stop providing handouts and instead get back to work. Do something; don't just pay for something. There are smart people in this Legislature with fresh ideas that do matter. No more picking winners and losers in the marketplace; we have seen that too many times: \$2.7 million here for a failed wind turbine industry in Windsor, and funding taken away from horse racing, an industry that employed thousands. This government has never proven itself capable of picking successful businesses with any regularity. As such, they're gambling with taxpayer money.

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Speaker, allow me to summarize: I cannot and will not support Bill 11 because, point number 1, the government does not have the money to spend. You're talking about spending new money that you don't have, and if it did, this government has not: (a) identified the real geographic boundaries of the bill; (b) provided us with solid criteria for how companies will be selected; (c) provided us with criteria for determining how much money a company would receive; or (d) shown us the accountability factors that need to be put in place, the terms and conditions to ensure a company doesn't simply shut down or move within a specific time period after receiving government money—oh, no, I should say "taxpayer money."

No one, including those in this Legislature and our municipal leaders, should support this bill without first finding out the answers to the above questions.

I want to again thank the member from Scarborough Centre for the submission of this bill, but I cannot support Bill 11 at this time; nor should anyone else.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to stand today and speak to some of the comments that I've heard from the member of Chatham-Kent-Essex.

We were all elected here to a minority government, and a minority government gives us a chance to work together. It has been many, many years since this Legislature has seen a minority government, and we need to make sure that we're putting that to good use. That's what New Democrats plan on doing.

This is now before us in third reading. When it was at committee, we put forward strong amendments, and they were based on things that we had been campaigning on. We want to make sure that there are strings attached to money when we're helping corporations, making sure that we are giving our people jobs and making sure that

the strings are attached to those jobs to ensure that they're there at the end of the day and that corporations just can't get up and walk away with our money.

I heard the member say that money was being put into this programming, but when I'm looking here, I'm seeing that no new money is being put into this. It's coming from the strategic jobs and investment fund. So it's money being moved around to ensure that people in different parts of the province do have jobs. I know that in my community of Hamilton Mountain we're striving and struggling to get new jobs there in the community.

I think voting against this bill would be the wrong thing to do. I will be supporting this bill, in hopes that we are looking at new, fresh ideas, that that we are doing something different and that we can put the people of Ontario back to work.

He mentioned the horse racing people and the jobs that have been lost in that industry. I'm sure these people would love to see investments into new jobs coming forward for them in such desperate times.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was here for 95% of the speech from the member of Chatham-Kent-Essex. I hope he brings in a private member's bill to actually make the riding Chatham-Kent-Leamington, which actually reflects the geography of the area.

It's interesting. I share with him the need for accountability. If you look at section 3.1 of Bill 11—amendments put forward, I assume, by the opposition third party—it says:

"The board of directors shall establish a local advisory committee and appoint its members. The composition of the committee must reflect sectoral and subregional interests within southeastern or southwestern Ontario, as the case may be...."

"Within 90 days after the end of every fiscal year, each corporation shall give the minister an annual report on its affairs during the fiscal year, and the report must include the audited financial statements of the corporation...."

"The minister shall lay the report before the assembly at the earliest reasonable opportunity...."

"The minister shall ensure that guidelines for each program are available to the public, setting out the performance standards to be satisfied by participants in the program with respect to the creation of jobs and other economic development targets"—very important. The mayor of Chatham, Randy Hope, I think would be very supportive of getting this program in place.

Mr. Speaker, last Friday a number of my Conservative friends were at the Kawartha Golf and Country Club in Peterborough, a beautiful golf course. Instead of being at the golf course on Friday, they should have come with me. I would have given them, free of charge, a tour of a number of companies in Peterborough that received EODF grants: Stickling's Bakery, Safran Electronics, Central Smith ice cream, McCloskey Brothers, Drain Brothers, Siemens and Flying Colours. They could

have come to see where the real work is going on in the province of Ontario—those men and women creating value-added wealth for this community—instead of playing golf last Friday. And my insider told me that the member for Prince Edward-Hastings left the meeting early.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to follow my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex. I think he brought a lot of good points, a lot of solid, factual points to bear on why we won't support this.

One of the key things he said was about debt and spending money they do not have. We're \$15.3 billion in the hole; there's no debating that. That's where we're at. I ask the question, am I being a good parent if I try to appease my children by giving them funds I don't have today, while knowing full well that I am saddling them and their children, probably, with a hole of debt that they may never dig out of? Speaker, that's not my way of going forward.

He talked a little bit about it being a wedge issue. I will go on record here so as to refute that wedge issue; that I'll work and I'll fight as hard as anyone in this Legislature for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound to get their fair share, if the Liberals go ahead and put more funds in—funds they don't have. Again, we need to ensure that we're here representing the hard-working, taxpaying people of Ontario. We shouldn't be trying to buy our way; we shouldn't be trying to put wedge issues in front when we're in such dire economic situations.

We need, as my colleague pointed out, to live within our means, not spend money that we do not have and saddle our kids. We're staring a \$15.3-billion deficit and a \$411-billion debt in the face.

A couple of colleagues from the Liberals and the NDP said that the banks aren't willing to lend money to small business. Well, then, I suggest, why aren't they bringing legislation forward, as a government, to do something more about that and ensure our small businesses do have a goal? We need to ensure that that's the case. We don't have to become the people who give out all of the money and create reliance on grants.

It's great for my colleague from Peterborough to stand here and spout off all the companies that he's giving money to. That, to me, is buying a seat. That's not doing what's needed for the people who are not here, who have to pay the freight. He's running us on money that we do not have today. You cannot continue to spend money you don't have, or you'll put us in the same place as Greece. I cannot support it. I will not support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: On the remarks that were just made by the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I concur almost 100%. I leave the "almost" there because I wasn't here, but I was in my office watching and listening to the greatest extent. What he says is true: There's no action plan.

What's the first, most important thing you look for? What do we look forward to in the economy? Jobs and the economy. Without jobs that create taxable income for the province, you can't have the programs that we all want.

I measure it this way: Our quality of life is really a measurement of the quality of the economy. Which way is the economy going in Ontario? It's going south, at 100 miles an hour.

What's happening? Now they're fighting with doctors. I met with 20 on the weekend in Durham, with Christine Elliott, and I've met with other doctors. I'm hearing from teachers on an unprecedented scale. These are two large groups in the economy that are very, very, very upset with this government. They're walking away from the table of negotiation. Reasonableness has left the office, and Premier McGuinty's hatchet man, Dwight Duncan, has come in.

We know the economy is in trouble because there was a very extensive report by Don Drummond, one of the top economists in Canada—he was Paul Martin's deputy minister, so he's very qualified—and he told them that they were in a structural deficit. The cliff is in sight. They have not reduced their speed or their spending one ounce.

I worry for the children—not just the pages here, but for the young people graduating from high school and university. What are the jobs for our young people? There is simply no plan that I've seen, other than spending and taxing. That's a moniker from the Liberals that has been well-earned, and this budget simply demonstrates they can't do the job.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. Again, I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton Mountain, Peterborough, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Elgin-Middlesex-London.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: —from Durham. Did you speak too as well?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: No.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: You just want me to say “Elgin-Middlesex-London” as well.

A couple of things here, Speaker: First of all, as I said earlier, in order for businesses to grow they really don't want the government involved in their businesses. They need to be offered a hand up, not a handout, because they'll take the money and, so to speak—you know, they'll take the money and run.

What is that really teaching people today? What is it teaching businesses? What is it teaching our young people in terms of—well, they have an attitude of expecting things just to happen their way. I don't fully agree with that.

The member from Peterborough talked about accountability, and I respect his comments on accountability, but my concern is, when they establish boards, who is going

to be on those boards? Is it going to be partisan boards whereby, in fact, they'll be able to bury or hide certain things? I don't know. I certainly wouldn't want that to become another Ornge situation. I refuse to use the word Ornge “scandal,” although I may want to call it what it is. Speaker, you cannot spend money you just do not have.

My colleague from Hamilton Mountain talked about moving money around from point A to point B in different funds. Well, that's just playing with numbers, that's all that is, and I don't agree with that either. The fact of the matter is—let's provide the proper workplace environment that encourages businesses and industry to—and are welcomed into a community. You set those standards. You maintain and keep energy rates low. You get rid of a lot of the red tape. Those businesses and industries, big or small, will create the jobs that will then provide for people to provide for their families.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Good afternoon, Speaker. I'm very happy to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 11, the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act. I also want to thank the other speakers who spoke on this bill for their comments and insights.

As many of you know, I've been very concerned about the extraordinary unemployment rate in my riding of London-Fanshawe. Our unemployment rate hovers just below 10%, and has done so for quite some time.

We've seen plant closures like EMD. While many believe the EMD scenario was unusual, I am here to tell you that it's not. The families and the workers of my riding and many others are desperate for this province and specifically this government to promote this real economic development in our region. Too many have lost their jobs, homes and, most importantly, their hope that we will come up with an effective solution to get them back to work as quickly as possible.

At its core, the idea the government put forth with this bill is sound: Invest in the people of the province and the growth will come; invest in workers of this province and the hope will return.

But the growth and the hope will only come if we invest in our province effectively. Our progress must be well thought out, well financed and have built-in accountability measures.

The people of Ontario have seen enough of their money go out the doors with very little return under this government's watch. Most importantly, our focus must be on job creation. Between September 2008 and May 2009, 250,000 Ontarians lost their jobs. The unemployment rate in centres like Windsor and Oshawa spiked well into the double digits, and Toronto wasn't that far behind. No sector was safe. From retail to information technology, this great recession has left deep and lasting impacts on people of this province.

Although there has been some job creation since the depth of this recession, economists are warning of a prolonged period of sluggish growth. Our unemployment remains stubbornly high while other provinces have

recovered to their pre-recession employment levels, and real wages continue to stagnate.

This government is pleased to pat itself on the back for their efforts around job creation, but the question remains, why haven't the tactics used by this government to mitigate the recession come to fruition? It is because this government has blindly continued down the wrong path of no-strings-attached corporate tax cuts. There were presentations in committee by leading economists like Toby Sanger, who analyzed how corporate tax reductions are distributed in the population. The result are in: The effect of no-strings-attached corporate tax cuts is profoundly regressive. He also noted that the priority should be on households who are suffering from a financial crunch, and not on the corporate sector.

We have seen record corporate profits, as we did with EMD, yet no investment in job creation or significant investment in our communities. In fact, we saw quite the opposite, with corporations coming to take advantage of our no-strings-attached corporate tax cuts and then literally running across the border to get the next one. They left our communities and families and workers out in the cold at the worst possible time without a second thought.

I may not be an economist, but I know what bad math looks like. The people of London-Fanshawe and many other ridings have been forced out of their jobs due to this government's refusal to accept that their approach is way off the mark. It's not working, and yet they continue blindly and resolutely down the same path over and over again. We are tired of watching companies post record-high profits while being handed tax cut after tax cut.

What are these businesses doing with the money from these tax cuts? We know they are not investing it back into the community and back into this province. Most of the excess profits went into financial speculative investments, mergers and acquisitions, share buybacks and major excess cash reserves. How does this approach put workers and their families back to work or strengthen our province?

Meanwhile, the debts of Canadian households have steadily increased and are now at record rates. In some instances, our household debt ratios are even higher than in the United States. I don't know about you, but I've been told many times that here in Canada and in Ontario we are insulated from much of the fallout that the recession had on the United States. Clearly, this isn't the case.

Our corporate combined tax rate in 2010 was 28.5%, making it less than in Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania and many others. Even the US weighted average is still as high as 36.1%. Meanwhile, corporate debt ratios have kept on falling way through the recession. So once again, the corporate tax sector has great balance sheets, lots of excess cash and isn't investing in Ontario.

Where are our priorities? When did it become okay to leave the families of this province high and dry solely to appease businesses, especially businesses that are not re-investing in this province, businesses that are not creating jobs and businesses who happily pack up and run way

while leaving our communities desolate? When you reduce the taxes on businesses from 44% to 25% and over the course of 10 years you can't prove their investment or job creation, why would this government continue down the same unproven path time and time again?

I do want to take a moment to acknowledge the efforts of my caucus and their tenacity in committee on this bill. This is the first government bill in a generation that has been substantially rewritten in committee. Our leader, Andrea Horwath, and the entire NDP caucus have been determined to include as many provisions as possible to make this bill work. Time and time again they have attempted to be fair and thoughtful in their approach. As we did with the budget, the NDP continued to roll up our sleeves and get the work done. I certainly know that the people of my riding can ill afford for us to play partisan political games when it comes to their futures, and the NDP heard them loud and clear.

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We asked for this bill to include common sense, accountability and less political interference, while working towards the goals of job creation and spurring economic growth. We raised issues that strengthened this bill to make it fair. We ensured funding announcements were less partisan, so that local MPPs would be guaranteed an invitation to appear at funding announcements. We ensured the funds would be housed in independent corporations with boards of directors drawn from the regional areas they represent.

We also required that there be local advisory committees that represent sub-regions, and potentially industry sectors as well. We also set out to include provisions around accountability measures, including job guarantees and more transparency in contracts. We have also initiated terms that included one-year reviews of the major provisions in the act to ensure that things work as expected, allowing for us to hone or refine the act as necessary to deliver the results it should.

I think we can all agree that these are substantial improvements to this bill, and it clearly demonstrates how minority government can be effective.

While the NDP is proud of the achievements they have obtained, we are also very clear that there is much, much more which needs to be done on the jobs front. Many of the Liberal job creation programs have been weak, and until we actually see the language used in the contracts, we won't know if the promised job guarantees are strong enough under this bill. We already know that the culmination of job losses has destroyed savings, and overall economic anxiety has put the squeeze on families, particularly on middle-income Ontario. It doesn't take much effort to pay attention to the fact that the average hourly wage has not changed since 1991, when we take inflation into account. Clearly, middle-income Ontario has been de-prioritized over the no-strings-attached corporate tax cuts.

This is why the NDP believes that emphasis must be placed on our job creation tax credit. We said this during

the fall election campaign, and it was again in our recent negotiations with the government on this budget: Reward job creators and get the people back to work.

Our proposal is sound and we know it will get Ontarians back into their jobs while boosting small and medium business activity. It is our priority to get this program into action, and we are pleased that this government has finally agreed to study it. We would certainly prefer for them to go beyond merely studying it and translate that into action. It is a simple but innovative idea that can get our province moving forward right away.

For clarity, here's how we propose that this program would work. The job creator tax credit would operate on a two-year term and be refundable. It can be administered through the existing corporate income tax system to simplify the administration. It would reimburse employers for 10% of the salary paid to new hires during the first year of the employment, to the maximum of \$5,000. It is also critical for us that businesses be required to demonstrate that their new hire, this new employee or employees, is a newly created job rather than a replacement for previous employees.

How can this new reporting be achieved? Well, it is easily achieved by having employers submit baseline workforce numbers and wage bill information annually. To calculate the credit, the numbers would be compared year to year, and employers would also have to submit information that indicates the total wage bill of the new employees hired. This reporting mechanism ensures employers would be eligible for the credit by simply increasing the wages of existing employees rather than creation of new employees.

To create over 50,000 jobs, \$250 million of the current \$2 billion allocated to the jobs and prosperity fund would be dedicated exclusively to that tax credit. In a riding like mine, it is easy to see how much of an impact we could have at restoring middle-income Ontarians back to the level of dignity and hope that they deserve, in the manner they want to be restored in, by creating employment options for people who currently have none. I was quite pleased to learn, through the work of the committee, that many stakeholders were prepared to discuss this bill with the goal of improving it. The Southwest Economic Alliance came to the table ready to work. They were well researched and well informed about the need in their region. They also clearly identified the strong economic heritage that the region of southwestern Ontario has in place, including a superior talent pool, a superior network of colleges and universities, along with innovation and research capabilities spread throughout not only the private sector but also public institutions. They echoed the NDP's call for the primary focus of the fund to be direct and measurable job creation.

I want to quote Mr. Lavoie of SWEA, who stated, "We've been hit hard by the manufacturing slowdown. There are a lot of unengaged workers in our area, and we believe that a grassroots approach to building small business is a way ... to re-engage these workers in the short to medium term."

He went on to say, "We feel that given the relatively modest size of the fund—\$20 million a year—and the pent-up demand for it, quite frankly, there's a real need to focus on business start-ups, expansion and retention in" the small and medium-sized enterprise "sector specifically. We want to do it that way because it's the best way to distribute the benefits of the fund..."

I was further pleased to hear that they strongly felt that both loans and grants should be evaluated based upon the number of jobs that would be created, and that the payout should come only when jobs have been created, which builds maximum accountability into the fund.

They also identified that a key component of this program is the inclusion of local advisory councils. It is crucial for the success of this program to ensure that those who know the area best and those who know the needs are also given the opportunity to guide and advise how best to spend these funds.

They also asked for an appropriate balance to be found between loans and grants. They recognized, as we all should, that there are many excellent co-operative projects coming from the NGO and not-for-profit sectors. By making grants available, as well as loans, the not-for-profit and the NGO sectors can effectively participate in the program and do what is best: offer effective services in our communities.

We know that the best way to get Ontario back to work requires a comprehensive and holistic approach, an approach that takes into account the immediate needs of unemployment, lack of funding available for small and medium-sized enterprises, and our community organizations.

I still feel that these funds are rather disproportionate to the need at hand and barely make a dent in Ontario's job crisis. This program falls short of what is needed to compensate for the loss of the tens of thousands of good-paying jobs in manufacturing in southwestern Ontario.

The situation in London-Fanshawe is so dire that it requires us to move forward as quickly as possible to provide relief to families now. Asking the families who are hit the hardest by the recession to wait for another few months before they receive our support is just unacceptable.

I ask everyone here today to put aside their partisan politics and prioritize this bill and its passing so that Ontarians have some hope, when they're looking for a job, that there will be a job out there for them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's a pleasure to make a few comments in response to the member from London-Fanshawe. I've noticed that she's always very detailed and certainly speaks with great sincerity.

My riding of Oak Ridges-Markham is probably in one of the more affluent parts of Ontario, in the GTA. In fact, if you come to my riding, say, Markham or Whitchurch-Stouffville, you'll see construction everywhere. You'll see a number of businesses booming. Markham is concentrated on high-tech industry, a lot of medical services,

medical assistive devices, pharmaceuticals. So it is with really quite a bit of interest that I've looked at the development fund that was created in eastern Ontario. I have no doubt that it should in fact be continued on a permanent basis. Some areas of the province that have been perhaps less unfortunate through this economic difficulty over the last several years would benefit as well, including, of course, southwestern Ontario.

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Looking at what the eastern Ontario development fund has been able to achieve—some \$53.5 million leveraged \$493 million in investments, an eight-to-one ratio, which created and retained over 12,000 jobs. The fund has spread out to support over 13 sectors in 13 counties across eastern Ontario, and a very high applicant success rate, some 86%; 113 projects approved out of 132 applications.

When KPMG reported that currently the eastern Ontario development fund is exceeding job growth targets and that these are sustainable jobs, not project-related, I was really extremely happy to hear that, and feel sure that Bill 11 is an excellent bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to comment on Bill 11, An Act respecting the continuation and establishment of development funds in order to promote regional economic development.

Unfortunately, I cannot support this bill. Part of the reason I can't support it is that the government seems to have forgotten where Muskoka and Parry Sound-Muskoka is. It seems to have disappeared off the map in terms of any support from the government. This government has created and supports various regional economic development funds. We have the northern Ontario heritage fund. In 2004, the government removed Muskoka from qualifying for that area. Now we have the eastern Ontario fund, we have the southwestern Ontario fund and then we have a black hole in the middle, and that's called Muskoka.

We just had the member from Oak Ridges-Markham talking about her riding as being quite affluent. I think the government members think that Muskoka is very affluent because they probably visit and they see the beautiful million-dollar cottages. But they forget that people live there year-round, and it's very much a seasonal economy. The average income levels in Muskoka are far below the provincial average. Perhaps some of the government members don't realize that. We have Ontario Works or welfare cases that are at just about record levels at this time.

The members very shortly will have a summer break. I suggest they come up and visit Muskoka, help stimulate the economy of Muskoka. I'm sure they'll enjoy themselves while they're there. But at the same time, maybe drive away from the waterfront, tour some back roads and try to learn about how the average person who lives in Muskoka year-round is struggling. Perhaps they will see that Muskoka is deserving of support, like anywhere else in this province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm very pleased to stand up and speak to this issue, and pleased to respond to the comments of the member from London-Fanshawe.

At the end of the day, what we're talking about here is an opportunity, an opportunity that companies in the London area and southwestern Ontario and, of course, in eastern Ontario will be able to benefit from, not as all of the funding they would receive for a particular initiative, not as even most of the funding they would receive for a particular initiative, but as that very important starter or seed funding that would attract other sources of funds.

One of the reasons that I'm so interested and supportive of this southwestern Ontario development fund is the success it has had in eastern Ontario. For every dollar from that eastern Ontario fund, they attracted between eight and 10 other dollars. That makes for a very powerful leveraging fund to create jobs for a region. I can't really understand why members of the opposition are not supportive of maintaining an eastern Ontario development fund, but in any event, in southwestern Ontario, boy, we can use the help. We've had a lot of very successful funds: helped establish Hanwha, Cakerie, supported Brose in our area, supported the auto industry, Magna. We've got Toyota up the road, CAMI up the road, both doing very well.

This is an important fund that we need to support, but I would simply say this: There has been a lot of discussion on this—a lot of discussion. People have pretty much had their say, so let's make a decision. Let's agree we can bring this to a vote, and those who like it can support it and those who have a different view can take their different view. It's time—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Okay, I'll return to the member for London-Fanshawe. You have two minutes to reply.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you for the comments from the member for Oak Ridges-Markham, the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka and the member from London West.

You know, with a minority government, the New Democrats have made a promise to people to make this minority government work, and I think we have a proven track record of that happening.

With this Bill 11, which is the economic development fund, having it go to committee—there were how many amendments adopted out of that? I believe it was five amendments that we worked hard on in committee to make sure that this bill had some accountability. One of the pieces that I'm very impressed with in work that was done on the committee was that there is going to be that one-year review of major provisions in the act to ensure that things are working as expected and to examine possible refinements.

When we're dealing with taxpayers' money, it is incumbent on us to make sure that that money is being used for the intent it was created for and that there are

strings attached. This money is to create jobs. When we give that taxpayers' hard-earned money back to businesses to create those jobs, we need to have the link. So I'm glad to see that that was one of the amendments that was clearly put in there, for a one-year review. Then you can tweak it. That way, if there have been problems, you catch them early. They're not going to grow into big, massive Ornge fields. So that's one good amendment, I thought.

The other amendment was about nonpartisan. When you come to this House, you need to do the work of the people, and if that means putting your banner aside, you do that for the better of the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: I rise to speak to Bill 11 as well. I've been up a couple of times on this bill already, and it's the kind of thing that a government comes up with when they're completely out of ideas. I've said that statement a few times when it comes to some government bills over the past several months since I've been here. There's not a lot to it. This bill is the kind of policy a government comes up with when it doesn't want to do any of the heavy lifting, when it doesn't want to make any hard economic choices. When you've spent eight years throwing money at problems and digging the province into a hole that it's going to take us a long time to dig out of, this is the kind of thing that you just keep doing.

The bill, with its lack of vision, is exactly the kind of thing we've seen time and time again from this government. When the going gets tough, you can trust the Premier and the finance minister to start throwing money around without a real plan to put it to work.

I know other members have said it as well: This is a government more concerned with looking like it's doing something than it is with actually doing something. We have real problems in the province. They've been detailed at great length in the House over the past several months and likely several years.

You know, we did have an announcement on Friday that just seems to go unnoticed. It's brushed aside by this government, but I think it says it all about this government. We lost 31,000 full-time jobs in May in this province. That was an announcement that was made last Friday, and the Premier stands up here in question period and he continues to trumpet how great Ontario's doing. They're not looking at the real numbers. They're not looking at themselves in the mirror. They're continuing to blame everybody else for the problems that this province is facing right now—31,000 full-time jobs. Those are real numbers.

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I find it quite interesting that the member from Peterborough stood up and spoke about how important the EODF has been in Peterborough. He had a long grocery list of businesses that have acquired money through the EODF. I'm sure they've been doing okay. But despite the fact that this government continues to throw money

around, I would just like to show that perhaps throwing all of that money around isn't working.

I told you about the story that came out last Friday, the number from StatsCan showing 31,000 full-time jobs lost. Okay, you've got that number. This story was in the Windsor Star on Saturday morning: "Windsor's unemployment rate dropped marginally in May but remains the highest in Canada...."

"The...jobless rate last month was 9.9%," in Windsor.

You would think that with all of the outstanding work that the EODF is doing in Peterborough, maybe Peterborough would be doing very well. You know what community in Canada has the second-highest unemployment rate?

Mr. Bill Walker: Peterborough.

Mr. Todd Smith: Peterborough.

Mr. Bill Walker: Shameful.

Mr. Todd Smith: Peterborough has the second-highest unemployment rate in all of Canada, at 9.2%. So, sure, some companies are doing well in Peterborough, but 9.2% of the population of Peterborough can't get a job.

There's more that needs to be done than continuing the eastern Ontario development fund. Some big structural changes need to take place in the province of Ontario to get this once-great province back on track.

You know, it's a shame. Here are some of the other numbers: Barrie, 9.1%. That would be third-worst in all of Canada—Barrie, 9.1%. Is Barrie included in this proposed southwest development fund? They're not even included in the southwest development fund.

Here's another one for you. How about Toronto, at 8.6%? We're in Toronto right now—8.6%, well over the national unemployment figures. Is Toronto included in the EODF or the southwest Ontario fund? No, they're not. Oshawa, 8.2%, well above the national average. Is Oshawa included in the eastern Ontario or southwest Ontario development fund? No, they're not.

So here we go with a government bill that isn't aimed at the right targets, for one thing, but it's proven that we need structural change in the province of Ontario. We need to go in a different direction. We have lost 31,000 full-time jobs in May in Ontario—scary, scary numbers—and those are the straight facts and the straight talk that you're going to get from this side of the House.

Ontario, as we mentioned, used to be the engine of Confederation. We all know now that that engine is faltering. Rather than opening the hood and getting their hands dirty, what do the Premier and the economic development minister and the finance minister do, instead of fixing that engine? They change the air freshener in the car. That's what they do. They think that's going to solve the problems of Ontario: Let's put a new pine-smelling air freshener in that vehicle and everything is going to run fine.

It doesn't matter how many cheques you hand out—and they're not government cheques. It's not government money. There no such thing as government money. It's your money; it's our money; it's the people's money. If

the fundamentals of your economy aren't sound, which clearly they're not here in the province right now, you're just going to have to keep handing out cheques. And maybe that's fine with some of the members on the government side. They like having their picture taken. I think that's what they like. They like the press conferences and the media availabilities. They like handing out the big, giant cheques to these companies because I think it makes them feel important. But what is it actually doing? It's not solving the problems in the province of Ontario.

We saw it with GM. The government signed over money during the 2008-09 crisis—lots of money—and, a mere three years later, here we are in the same boat again: Oshawa losing 2,000 jobs. It's not like they're ending those lines at General Motors; it's not like the Equinox or the Impala are going out of production. No, they're not. They're going to continue to build them. They're going to build them in the United States, in Michigan or in Tennessee.

Back to Bill 11: It's just a stopgap solution. It's the cork in the flood or the Band-Aid on the bullet wound, so to speak. Ontario is about to have the highest electricity rates, not in Canada; in North America. We've got a budget that just imposed significant tax measures on businesses, and there are over 380,000 pieces of regulation in the province of Ontario. That's just provincial regulation. That doesn't include municipal or federal regulation. There are over 380,000 pieces of provincial regulation in Ontario. As the PC small business critic and the critic in charge of red tape reduction, I can tell you I speak to small and medium-sized business people all the time—not the size, but the company—and they're having serious problems expanding in the province of Ontario.

Do you know what they say the two biggest problems are? Well, let me give you three, because they always say three. The first one is red tape. The 380,000 pieces of regulation would lead you to a good assumption as to why that's happening. There's all this red tape and government interference in their lives. Taxation is number 2. Taxation is huge in the province of Ontario. And the number 3 item—it never used to be, but it's number 3 right now—is electricity, energy costs in the province of Ontario.

So if the government thinks Bill 11 is anything more than a half measure, then they're wrong. There are some big things that need to be fixed in the province, and this is just geared towards press releases and photo ops, as I said earlier, for ministers and members of provincial Parliament.

We've hit 65 months now where Ontario's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average, five and a half years that the unemployment rate in Ontario has been higher than the rest of Canada. This government, this Premier and his cabinet have had five and a half years of worsening conditions here, and still we're presented with legislation that's indicative of a government that seems to enjoy sitting on its hands. In other words, they're continuing to do the same old things that

they've done for the last five and a half years: throw money at it and hope that this will solve all of our problems.

We live in a province that's crying out for real answers and demanding real opportunity be restored here. Ontarians are sick of a government that continually gives them half a solution. The minister has continually gotten up and talked about the jobs created by the eastern Ontario development fund. I speak of the economic development minister, of course. I know that in my area the program would be nothing without the job that's being done on the ground there by Chris King and the Quinte Economic Development Commission. They're doing great work there. The folks at the QEDC work tirelessly with the municipal politicians in my area to ensure that the conditions are ripe for business to succeed. I would state that it reflects poorly on the minister to take credit for the hard work of others happening on the ground there in the Quinte region.

Let's take a closer look at where that money has gone over the last four years. During the three-plus years prior to the last election that the EODF had been up and running in eastern Ontario, 60% of the ridings in eastern Ontario were held by Liberal members—that's not the case anymore—and 40% of the ridings were held by PC members. So we had a Liberal-Conservative 60-40 split at the time. It's worth noting that these numbers only include eastern Ontario ridings that are eligible for the program. Prior to the last election, 60% of those Liberal ridings received 78% of the grants and roughly 81% of the money that was handed out by the program. Despite having 60% of the ridings, 81% of the cash distributed by the EODF went to Liberal-held ridings. Slush funding is nothing new in politics, but usually the government in power has the good sense to at least try to hide it.

We brought the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation before the committee on general government, back in April, to discuss this bill, and we did help out the NDP in making some amendments to the bill when it comes to clarity and accountability when handing out these kinds of dollars.

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When Mr. Duguid was confronted with these statistics, the minister said the following, and I'll quote from Hansard: "There's a great deal of accountability that goes into the process, but I can assure you that it's not—I think you're insinuating somehow that maybe there's some kind of politics that go into this—" When I pressed him on whether or not these stats were a coincidence, the minister didn't have an answer. Perhaps, ironically, the minister raised two ridings that have done well since the election in collecting grant money. The ridings he raised were Kingston and the Islands and Peterborough, both of which, I'm sure coincidentally, are represented by Liberal members. Since the election, those are the two ridings that the minister decided to pinpoint were having a lot of success in getting grants.

The numbers get even more interesting when you take a look at calendar 2011 before the last election—remem-

ber, only 60% of the ridings held by Liberals, but in calendar 2011, prior to the election, those ridings received roughly 86% of the grants that were awarded and more than 92% of the money that was awarded.

Mr. Bill Walker: Wow. Bit of shame, there.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a bit of a seat-saver program, you could say, as well. Or at least it appears that way.

Mr. Bill Walker: Seat-buyer.

Mr. Todd Smith: A seat-buyer, and it didn't work.

So no wonder, when I asked the minister during committee if this was a coincidence, he deflected that question. No coincidence could be quite this targeted.

Mr. Speaker, it never fails to amuse me when I get to sit in the House, as I did this morning, and listen to the finance minister talk about the corporate welfare strategy. They're coming in this House and asking the opposition to help them keep a seat-saver program alive—that's what they're doing—and now they're looking at expanding it to southwestern Ontario. They're coming in here and asking us to give them the same program for southwestern Ontario that they tried to use as a seat-saver program or a seat-buyer program in eastern Ontario.

The minister can talk all he wants about the results of this program—and as I mentioned earlier, he owes any success in my area to Chris King and the Quinte Economic Development Commission, which uses the eastern Ontario development fund. Without those responsible professionals taking this rather political program and turning it into a respectable tool in their arsenal, this program would have been very seriously abused in many regions, and it arguably already has been, as we're seeing in the debate over the bill. The criteria for funding are being adjusted, or there has been some debate for adjusting the criteria, to target money at university-based research and development now.

This would seem like an admirable goal, right? You take the money that you're distributing and you try to put it into R&D at universities. Just consider this for a moment: The two universities in eastern Ontario, Trent University in Peterborough—a Liberal-held riding—and Queen's University, Kingston and The Islands—a Liberal-held riding, the Attorney General is there.

In southwestern Ontario, the currently defined catchment area for the new fund also has two universities. Guess which ones they are. In the riding for the member of Windsor West and also in the riding of the health minister.

Mr. Bill Walker: Interesting. Coincidence, I'm sure.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm sure.

As we like to say in Hastings county, if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it probably is a duck. I see the agriculture minister nodding over there. He knows that statement. They use that in Flamborough too, I'm sure. So I guess what I'm saying is, if it looks like a slush fund and operates like a slush fund, it probably is a slush fund.

Let's get into the fund, because this is a central issue. I addressed this earlier. It's the easiest solution in the world to simply throw money at a problem, because it

creates the appearance that you're actually doing something; it gives the sense that your government is interested in finding solutions when, in reality, all you're interested in is biding time until someone comes along and fixes the problem for you.

If this bill passes, we'll have three regional development programs in this province, three programs whose sole purpose is to foster regional economic development in very specific areas. Rather than address the problems in the province as a whole, rather than pick up the whole province and make it better, we're going to get this regional patchwork. We're going to pit the north against the east and the east against the southwest. The point of this is transparent: As long as the regions and the wardens and the mayors are fighting each other for a bigger slice of the pie, they're not focusing on how this government has failed the province as a whole.

It has already been detailed in the House today. What happens when Niagara falters? Well, they don't have an economic development fund.

Mr. Bill Walker: Neither does Muskoka, I don't think. Do they, Norm?

Mr. Todd Smith: Muskoka doesn't either. What about Hamilton? So do we create, then, a Niagara fund? Do we create a Muskoka fund? Do we create a Hamilton fund? I see some members from Ottawa here. They've told us they have a problem as well. The city is experiencing unemployment rates that are above the national average. A couple of ministers are from the Ottawa area, actually. What next? Are we going to have an Ottawa or a national capital region development fund?

We just lost 2,000 jobs at GM in Oshawa because this government has failed in its economic stewardship. Can the minister tell the House when we're going to get a Durham development fund? He didn't talk about Durham, but we shouldn't leave them out, either.

There are all kinds of areas of the province that aren't included in this bill. As I said at the start of my 20 minutes here this afternoon, we need to look at the province as a whole. There are some major changes that need to occur in how the province is doing business in order to get us back on the right track. Creating these little funds that don't sound like a whole lot of money, \$20 million a year—but when you add them all up, it adds up to a lot of money. Billions of dollars, as a matter of fact, have gone into a myriad of different funds across the province.

So, Mr. Speaker, in case you haven't guessed it yet, we won't be voting in support of Bill 11. I can't support a bill that the government has already shown is for its own political gain. I can't support a bill that says if you just throw money at the problem, then it will eventually go away.

This bill gives the government an excuse, a way of saying that they did something, as every month this province is adding to the unemployment line. I can't support a patchwork solution to a province-wide problem. We need to start tackling the tough issues, and Bill 11 doesn't do that. We need serious economic policy in this province, and Bill 11 doesn't even pretend to be that.

We don't need any more Band-Aid solutions to big problems. Some 31,000 jobs lost in the province of Ontario in the month of May—completely unacceptable; the youth unemployment rate—16.5%.

I talk to parents, young families in Prince Edward-Hastings all the time whose children are having to go to the oil sands in Alberta or in Regina where, remarkably, the unemployment rate—I've lost my paper here, but I believe—here it is right here: Regina, 3.9% unemployment, compared to 9.9% in Windsor.

There are some serious problems in the province of Ontario right now, and you don't have to look far to understand why those problems exist. The Premier of Ontario has been here for nine years. The finance minister has been by his side for most of that time. Serious problems in the province of Ontario, and I can't support any more Band-Aid thinking: That's why I'll be voting against Bill 11.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to stand in my place here to respond to the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, who has a very negative viewpoint of Ontario.

I think that Ontario is well-positioned. It's a tough world. They neglect that there was a major recession. They neglect that the United States is in terrible economic shape. They neglect that the Canadian dollar has risen about 50%. They neglect to say that manufacturing is the base in Ontario. They neglect to think that in the Third World, labour is about 30 or 40 cents, compared to our labour. So we can't compete on a lot of that. That has made a major change throughout the world, but I think Ontario has done quite well.

This program specifically, if we're looking at south-west Ontario, we have to look at how successful the eastern Ontario development fund was, and it was successful. I've said before when I was up here, Ontario only puts a small percentage of those funds in; I think, on average, it's 11%. You have companies that have ideas, that can hold the employees they have and can increase those employees, and those are the ones we have to target. We get all of the submissions in, and you look at the best. To have I think it was a 98% success rate, that has to be great.

So I think the people on the other side, the Conservatives, don't want to create jobs in southwestern Ontario. They don't want to help those communities that are really struggling. That seems to me to be very counter-productive, as a government.

This is a good bill. It worked in eastern Ontario. We made some changes. These are good changes. Now let's take it to southwestern Ontario and give all those small communities in southwestern Ontario the benefit of this assistance from government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's interesting when I hear some of the notes from my honourable colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings, where he talks about how we're

leading in some of these categories, but it's not in an area where we want to lead. We don't want to be leading with the number one, number two and number three municipalities with the highest unemployment in the country. We're leading again with the cost of hydro.

I think this government has got to turn the table upside down and start looking at making things that really make a difference. We want to be able to tackle these unemployment rates.

From some of these astounding numbers, one would have to wonder if they really are looking for the biggest bang for their buck. When you're only looking at the government's own ridings, are you really picking out the best choices, or are you only going after what we've seen this government do so many times in the past: seat-saver programs, whether it be Oakville or Mississauga, where there's no regard for—I hate to use the word—the billions of dollars wasted, only to look at trying to keep a majority in this House? It's time that we started putting the people of Ontario before the interests of this government as they try to cling to life here.

It's hard when people come up and you try to defend what I think is an honourable position as a politician. I've been involved for 20 years. But things seem to be so partisan. One main issue I had was putting policies in place where everybody was treated fairly. When we look at the results of this grant, we certainly don't see that, especially when I hear of earlier last month when the member stood up and took credit for the grant going to one of the companies in my riding, where in fact the grant never did go to them. They never did build the building.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to intervene here after the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

What I've liked most about Tim Hudak's team is the consistency. Our policy has been pretty clear—and you as Acting Speaker would know that—that it is wrong of Premier McGuinty to pick winners and losers. In most cases, he has picked more losers than winners. But in fact—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, look, Research in Motion was doing fine before you guys got elected. Look at them now. I didn't say you caused it, but it's a lot of that intervention in the marketplace that maybe has caused some of the distress.

All I say to you is this. General Motors going south: They're losing jobs faster—I think they should stop working quite as hard, not just in eastern Ontario but in southwestern Ontario. Look at the solar company that went out of business down in the Minister of Finance's riding.

Actually, here's the real issue: Government doesn't create jobs. Government creates the climate for job creation and investment. What the markets watch closely is long-term stability first. Stability is a tax policy.

Here's the truth: The people of Ontario—I have a few minutes here. I could ask for more time. But here it is: In the previous budget, in 2011, they said that they were going to reduce the corporate tax rate from 11.5% to 10%. This is a fact, so listen up. But then, just in this last budget, they cancelled; they backtracked. There have been people arguing that the reason they backtracked was for votes.

Is it the right economic policy? That's the question. Really, this whole debate about whether it's the northern plan, the eastern plan—there should be an economic plan for all of Ontario, and it would include Durham and other places that are excluded today.

I don't understand the policies they have, and I can't support Bill 11.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I sat intently listening to my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings. He brought a lot of good things up there. He brought a lot of poignant points. I don't think he was being negative, as one of the people from across the floor said. I think what he was being—and it's a healthy thing; it's realistic. He's looking at the financial situation our province is in and he's being very frank with the people of Ontario. He's not going out and trying to rubber-coat it and think it's rose-coloured glasses and use terms like, "We have very solid debt." Well, isn't that really wonderful for these wonderful pages down in front, who will be paying that debt when they're long past my age?

Speaker, he raised very practical opinions. He says, "Why are we doing a patchwork quilt?" We have an Ontario-wide issue; we have an Ontario-wide need for a solution, and yet this government, once again, with a seat-buyer mentality, wants to be able to just start going here and there. Why doesn't Durham—

Mr. John O'Toole: Seat-saver.

Mr. Bill Walker: No, it's a seat-buyer, John. Seat-saver, seat-buyer—they're both the same things at the end of the day. They're using taxpayers' money to pad their ridings. And it's just—92%, I think you said, of the funds in eastern Ontario went to Liberal-held-riding projects; just not appropriate, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of the day, we have to not lose sight; the government doesn't have money to spend on new programs. They're \$15.3 billion in the hole, at a time when we have record revenues. They're still spending like drunken sailors, Speaker. They cannot continue to do this, or these young folks sitting in front of you will never have the hope of ever having the lifestyle that we've enjoyed throughout my lifetime. We've come through some wonderful, wonderful times. A part of that is because governments prior lived within their means. We weren't spending \$10 billion servicing the debt and then coming up and promising, "We'll give you more money in a patchwork quilt."

Therefore, I will not support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity. Thanks to my colleagues from Ottawa-Orléans, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, Durham and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. The last three speakers made a lot of sense, and obviously, they were paying close attention to what I was saying, so I appreciate that very much.

We do have a serious problem in the province of Ontario. For some reason the member from Ottawa-Orléans doesn't quite grasp the seriousness of the situation in Ontario right now. He's got that Liberal mentality that everything is going to be okay as long as we fire some more money at it; just keep chucking money at it and everything is going to get better. But that's not the way it works. We're going down a slippery slope if we continue to go this route in Ontario. We can't continue to throw money at every problem that we have. We have to make some really tough choices and get moving in the right direction.

We all know about the budget and the fact that the budget doesn't address the problems in the province of Ontario. It's a terrible budget. It was sold as an austerity budget. It increases spending in 14 of 24 ministries—"We're just going to keep throwing money at everything; it's going to get better." We need to reduce the size of government; we need to go in a different direction.

We need to get out of the way of our businesses so that they can create jobs—380,000 regulations on the books in Ontario, red tape getting in the way of job creation in the province of Ontario. We need to get out of the way so that our businesses can create jobs. We need to create the environment in Ontario so that our businesses can flourish. We need to bring down the cost of energy. We had the cheapest electricity rates in North America 10 years ago. Now they're on the cusp of being the highest in North America, and we're seeing businesses like GM take their car-building and truck-building facilities to Michigan and to Tennessee, of all places.

We need serious change in the province. That's why we can't support Bill 11.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to get an opportunity to stand and speak in opposition to this bill. I've been involved in politics for—well, it's almost 20 years now. I was there when the Bob Rae government was just on its way out, and saw the Mike Harris government come in and make some necessary changes that the municipalities were looking for and trying to make this province more efficient. When they ran their campaign, they made some commitments, they made some promises. I look back, and there's one thing you can't criticize them for: They followed what they promised to do.

1710

Then we saw the McGuinty government come in, who, at the same time, promised wonders and actually even went as far as signing a contract that they would not increase taxes for the taxpayers of Ontario. So what did they do? Within a month of getting into power, the

largest health tax increase in Ontario's history—and it goes on and on.

When you look at the HST, there are some arguments on the merits of it, but this is the only province that took it in without making it neutral. They took a huge tax increase hit with the HST.

You look back at this government's spending: Their spending has increased 80%, most of that in salaries. Again, when you look at the track record for the last two elections, salaries were used to buy significant funding for some of their benefactors, in some of the legislation they put through. One really has to wonder how the legislation that they put in place changed some of the laws to make it easy in Ontario to do that. That was not something that was done in any of the other provinces. We're the only province where you can jump in and unions can contribute as much money as we do in the province of Ontario. It seems funny, but it only seems to benefit one party: the ruling government.

Now, some of their promises, even they're having a hard time keeping.

You look at some of the studies that come out. The Auditor General was the first one that came out and warned this government of the spending, if they don't address the problems. With things such as credit rating issues, we've now seen a downgrade since their budget came out. They're talking about getting the budget through and needing to get it through. It's the result of this budget on the verge of being passed that we got the downgrade and the warning from the other credit agency.

It's interesting, this whole idea of spending money faster than they can take it in. I'm telling you, they've increased taxes substantially, so it's hard to believe that the deficit can go up when your taxes have gone up by so much. I think they're talking somewhere around 60% increases since they took over.

Going back to 2003 when I first became mayor, this government took over power about the same time, I think about a month before I was there. When it came to March, at the end of the year—and it looked like there was some talk all year, through the election. They talked about how the Eves government was running a huge deficit. Well, it's interesting, because when you look back at the forensic audits they looked at, this government spent \$3.5 billion in the last couple of weeks of March, on the previous government's watch. They did this with unbudgeted, unannounced spending. Looking back at it, is there any other result you can get than to say that it was there to make the previous government look worse than it was? I think it ended up being \$4.5 billion. Even that was the result of not taking money that's generally taken against that year's budget into the next year's. In fact, the Ernie Eves government had a surplus. Then, for years they stood there at ROMA and they talked about how they inherited this deficit. You've got to get away from the spin that they're putting on to this.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Some \$5.6 billion.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Yes, and \$3.5 billion in two weeks in March. Imagine that. I remember our local MPP

talking to me and saying, "I'm run off my feet. We can't make all of the announcements this week so we're going to carry them over into April, but they're still counting against this year's budget." That's what we're looking at. Is that good governance? Or is that all about the perception in the public? It's just not right. I looked at that and you just wonder, how can you run a government like that?

We're looking back nine years later, and we can see the results. We're looking at unemployment now. At that time, Ontario was on fire. Employment was going well. You've got to look back at some of the problems that Premier Harris had. The economy was running so well, he was running out of electricity. But you guys fixed the problem: You shut down the manufacturing industry. Our peak power has never been higher than in 2003, and even that spin was looked upon as blaming the electrical system. Of course, even in the Auditor General's report, they highlight the fact that this was a problem in the States that triggered the shutdown. Of course, they made hay out of that. It's time that you got—you've got to get involved and you've got to tell people what's right.

As a member of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, the first year—you know, as a municipality, I go back to 1999. I mean, municipalities are—there were some changes made through the property tax system to make them a little more self-sufficient. The OMPF funding that we received in 1999—and I know there's been a lot of inflation going on. It's over 10 years now, 11, 12 years. They're still receiving—or actually, we're receiving less in the municipality than we did back in 1999. That's in actual dollars; no inflation has been added. Actually, in our case, in South Glengarry, we're receiving about \$300,000 less.

So how do you account for running a municipality when we don't have anything but property tax? It's little wonder that Ontario has the highest property taxes in the country; I guess I might even say, probably the highest in North America.

It's another reason why—if you're looking at GM and you're looking at trying to decide where you're going to build your next car or your next Cadillac, would you build it in Ontario? Because not only are our rates some of the highest in North America right now—we're not quite there; next year—but they're talking about it going up another 45% in the next five years.

When you look at the Auditor General's report, he warns us that that's if the government contracts were on pace with what they had programmed. But actually, they're far ahead. The Green Energy Act is well over-subscribed, so the numbers of 45% don't count that.

It sounds good to use the word "green" in just about anything and people are kind of happy. But he also said one thing: They have an obligation to let the people of Ontario know what the act is costing them, because they don't know. They try to blame it on infrastructure, blame it on many things. But we can't afford to pay this and we're looking at—what?—another \$30 billion that this Green Energy Act is going to cost us for power we don't need.

Now we're turning around and we can't sell the stuff because we have a surplus of power. We're not using as much as we did in 2003. So now we're paying our competitors to take the power for almost nothing. Was it \$1.8 billion up to last year that we paid our competitors? Wouldn't it be nice if New York state sent us a cheque for \$1.8 billion to take power that we're going to have to turn around and buy? I mean, that's what's happening. That's the ridiculousness of this whole system.

Their answer to some of these economics—one year, when they were talking about reducing the absolute values of the OMPF funding, the wardens' caucus at ROMA asked numerous questions. They lined up at the mikes and they asked the government over and over again how they could cut this funding. It's interesting: That share of the funding was maintained.

But their answer to this whole issue of being held accountable at ROMA, with some 2,000 delegates—they changed the rules the next year so that they couldn't ask the same question more than once. I mean, that's the answer to fixing the economic problems: You just change the rules so people can't ask the questions.

I guess at that time they were finding that they couldn't fool the rural areas—the ROMA's values of eastern Ontario—or I'm sorry, of Ontario. They weren't fooling them. So I guess if you don't like the headlines, you just change the rules so they can't ask the questions.

We go back and we talk about this austerity budget. We've got Don Drummond. One's got to wonder why would we spend that kind of money in getting an esteemed economist—the only previous Liberal economist at the federal level—to come in and do a study, if you're not going to listen to it? Were they thinking they wouldn't be there and this was something else for somebody to look after or have to step over to try to fix the province? But they ignored it. They ignored 300 or 300-and-some recommendations in it, or a large number, anyway. They sat back, and we're looking at a deficit that's the same or a little bit more than last year. Spending is up—well, it'll be up \$2 billion, and then they added a number of extra things in to get some buy-in from the third party. Surprise, surprise: It's still the same spending and the same deficit. I don't know how they did that, but one has got to wonder how you could spend that kind of extra money and still come out at the same number.

1720

It's interesting. You're talking to different people and—I get a lot of people and their comments are, "You've got to do something about this government." You sit back and you wonder: Why the differences? When you look at the map of Ontario, other than the north, why does it look blue except for a couple of little spots in the major cities? One has to wonder why the rural area has chosen not to support this government, with very few exceptions. Is it because they're land-owners and they're a little more concerned about borrowing money to the extent we're borrowing? Are they more concerned about their children? I don't know. It's hard to

believe that you could have a difference of areas, where the rural or the non-dense areas, whether it be in the north with the NDP or basically the rest of the province further south, chose not to follow this government and not to believe its policies.

In the rural areas, their answer to me is, "How many times can somebody tell you something that they're not going to do, or promise something and not follow through, before you start to wonder if they have any intention of"—but you know, in the last election they had an interesting slant. Instead of taking the credit for the politicians and not being able to believe them, they spread it around, saying, "Look, you can't believe politicians—anybody." Nobody wanted to talk about the last time this Conservative government was in and they followed their promises, just like they are in Ottawa.

There are some tough decisions. I mean, there's a lot of spending that there's not a person in this Legislature doesn't think is important. But it comes down to how much to put back onto our children. Somebody has got to pay this back. There's no silver bullet, as they say. You can't go on spending money without the idea that it's just going to disappear, unless you're counting on us going bankrupt and we can write these expenses off.

We're looking around the world where this happens time and time again, and now, just on the weekend, we hear this with Spain and the issues they're having there. In my own mind, I was just wondering, "Well, how big is Spain?" Germany's going to help it out. But Spain's economy is two thirds the size of Germany's, and they're expected to bail them out. They're expected to bail Greece out. What happens if one of those countries fails? What happens over here?

We're already seeing some electrical contractors talking about the economy. They see it as soft. They've seen it as soft for the last number of months. People aren't spending money.

Our own public are looking around and they're seeing what's being done around the world and the problems people are having with debt. Our debt loads as Canadians, and even as Americans, are going down. People are seeing that they can't be borrowing at the levels at which they were borrowing in the past. I think what they'd like to see in the government is their own government being a lot more responsible and forward-thinking. If you're going to spend scarce dollars, you have to be somewhat cognizant of just what you're doing.

We look at the scandals this government is taking, whether it was eHealth in the past—we're looking at the Ornge ambulance. A lot of people say that the way you learn from your mistakes is to look at what you've done. But this is a government that refuses to acknowledge and refuses to let this House look at just what happened at Ornge. The resistance that has been there against that select committee, I find that hard to believe, because I thought that in a minority government, the members of the House, the majority, would dictate some of the runnings of this House. But then I hear the comment back: "Well, no, it has got to be unanimous." This is a

democracy. Our whole principles are built on majority votes, and the majority of the members that day voted for a select committee. So what do they do? They just talk about how great things are running.

Here we are—how many months into it?—and we haven't been allowed to talk to the CEO of the corporation. Today, I was glad to hear that the subpoena was issued for him that binds him to come. They should have been wanting to hear what happened. I mean, these were some of the organizations they put in place. You have to start to wonder about what you're doing here.

I talk to small businesses in my riding and they talk about the roadblocks for going anywhere. If they want to do anything, not only are they so numerous it's crazy, but some of the decisions that are coming down from their agencies—you know, you're sitting there, and how do you justify them? There's certainly an idea that you go over the top.

Look at some of the numbers here. I look at our agencies going from 250 to 150 under the Mike Harris government and, granted, you could take the other slant and say maybe they went too far. But what have we got? We're over 600—how do you justify that?—in eight years. You talk about small business leading this province, making a difference. You're getting in their way.

My colleague from Kitchener was showing me a bill from the TSSA for an inspection for one of the propane dealerships: just compliance testing, no problems, passed it. A thousand bucks—a small distributor. That's just the inspection fees, the mileage of one trip. He's got to raise \$1,000 to pay that tax, and that's on top of his property tax, it's on top of his electricity bill, and it's on top of all the administration costs he has to run a business. It's no wonder—I walk into the local grocery store in Williamstown and it's like an attack when you walk in. They get their hydro bill, and they're upset. They say, "How do you expect me to run this place? I can't afford to cool my products."

Their answer is, "Well, if you don't use the power during the day, it's cheaper at night." Try to turn off your freezers during the day. Tell your customers they have to come at night. It just doesn't work.

Miss Monique Taylor: Ice cream.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Yes, ice cream. I'd have to say, if I look at our area, we used to have a hydro system that was reliable. In the village of Lancaster, Dairy Queen lost its full supply of ice cream three times in a year. They were forced to go out and get generators. That never happened. Maybe once every five or six years would you lose power for hours at a time. In summertime, many times without a major storm—and it's just, "That's the way it is."

So the confidence that we need to put into this province to keep our own businesses, let alone attracting somebody—we have a lot of new Canadians coming to this country. They have an opportunity to settle wherever they want, and we can see that fewer of them are settling in Ontario because it's not the land of promise that it used to be. In fact, I heard the Premier complaining that

they weren't getting their continued fair share of help for immigration from the federal government. But it's interesting; actually, the funding had gone up, but it's based on where they settle. The problem was not that they weren't paying the money—they were paying the same money or more per immigrant—but they weren't coming to Ontario, so the money dropped off. Were they expecting more money for less people? That was their answer: They complained that they aren't getting fair help from the government. Well, they actually increased it, but when you're not getting the results—I think I've heard that many times—then don't expect the money.

Nobody knows that more than our small businesses. If they don't get the results, they don't stay in business. These are people who have borrowed everything they could or everything they can to make a go of it. They employ people. Every time you turn around, it's like a bad word, you know: "Jeez, here's a businessman making some money," but in actual fact the people making the money sometimes are the banks, because all they're doing is increasing their debt load to stay alive, hoping that things will go back the way they used to be.

I think if we want, as a province, to get back to the way we used to be, back to being the leader in Canada, then we've got to take some steps and make some hard decisions on where we're putting this money, and they aren't going to be popular, but there have to be some tough decisions. We've got to look at them at the end of the day and say, "We did what had to be done." I think those are the policies you'll see under the PC government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for—

Mr. Mario Sergio: York West.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): York West. Thank you.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I was waiting for my other colleagues, but I guess they didn't put in a speaker.

I'm very pleased to make some comments, absolutely, with respect to the member from I believe it's Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

1730

I have to pick up on a couple of points that he has made, especially when he says, "Look at the feds: They have a hard time; they have to make decisions." We are another level of government, but we're still dealing with representing the same people. So they have difficult decisions, and they have to make those difficult decisions. We have to make difficult decisions, and we have been making those difficult decisions.

The fact is that I hear so much in the House about the southwest fund and the eastern development fund and stuff like that. I say this is a wonderful thing. Why are we criticizing and not supporting the creation of jobs and bringing prosperity to those regions?

There are in the eastern region alone, in this particular development fund, some 113 projects, serving 13 counties and 13 municipalities. I am sure that those municipalities are filled with working people, families, in all

kinds of businesses and sectors. They all have families; they all have kids to go to school; they all need a good education; they all need good health care. Why wouldn't or shouldn't we support those particular communities?

I think it's a wonderful opportunity to put partisanship aside, to say, "We'd like to support the eastern fund and the northern Ontario heritage fund as well. We'd like to support the southwestern fund."

All in all, it's our people; it's their jobs; it's their livelihood. I think it's a good thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: First, I want to comment on the remarks being made by our side, which I believe pretty much summarized our concerns. The member who I can tell you speaks with some experience is the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. He's an engineer, and I think he was on council as well. I thought he added value.

I'm also impressed that the member from York West commented. The Liberals today have not been participating in this. They're trying to sort of play the games here, as they are. The bill has been to committee and has come back substantially amended—almost totally rewritten, to be honest.

To me, there are two or three things going on here. The member from York West said that it should be a priority to have prosperity in every region, and I couldn't agree with him more. But what we have in Ontario now is quite the opposite. The unfortunate dilemma of eight years of taxing and spending has pretty well ruined Ontario's opportunities. But you have created these political slush funds, we call them, in eastern Ontario and for the southwestern Ontario fund, along with the northern Ontario heritage fund.

It's important for members of the public—you should know that there are sections where it reinforces that at least seven of the persons appointed to—there must be two boards, to start with, like there is for the northern heritage fund, which is somewhat different. There must be seven political appointments to each one. But it does say clearly that at the end of the day, the minister can scrub it all and just overrule any of the work done by the committee. It's a political reality.

Now, they've excluded—this is important, given that Barrie is excluded and Oshawa is excluded. Oshawa has passed a resolution asking why they've been excluded. They're not in the eastern fund; they're not in the southwest fund. They're in the GTA. Who said the GTA is doing well? We have the highest unemployment ever—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: Speaker, it probably is almost painful to hear me speak again in here, because I think I have done a hit on almost every speaker.

But I think a few of my colleagues have already pointed out—my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry has 20 years of experience. He speaks

from sitting on a committee. In fact, I am told—and some people on the other side might want to pay attention to this—he still has the binders, so he has the facts of how this was developed and what it was supposed to be and what it was supposed to have accomplished over the years.

Speaker, we just can't lose sight, as I've said in here every time today. There are more bills that we should be speaking about. We need to take fundamental change to where our province is going, and this bill is nothing more than a wedge issue. It's just trying to take, again, focus—it's like what they're doing with Ornge. We want to get to the bottom of Ornge. They want to bring something in that has absolutely nothing to do with the real issues that we should be facing today. We want to talk about the real budget, the structural deficit they're running—\$15.3 billion and a \$411-billion debt, in eight years, might I add, that they have created. And it's all someone else's problem. The world is beautiful. It's rose-coloured glasses. Just keep saying, "That darned old recession," you know?

All the other provinces in Confederation—if I'm not mistaken, all the other provinces in Confederation faced the exact same economic downturn, but they've all come out of it okay. They have made the tough decisions. They've stopped the spending. I could not believe, in this budget, that we were talking austerity, and 14 out of 24 ministries received a spending increase. This is doing nothing. This is just adding another fund to wedge more people. It's going to start pitting region against region.

My colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings, I think, really encapsulated it. Why are we not putting in a province-wide solution for a province-wide problem? We're all in this together. We're all facing the same issues. So why do you pick one here and pick one there? Speaker, we just can't support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment. The member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Well, thank you very much. I know people aren't getting tired of hearing me speak.

Some 31,000 jobs lost in May in the province of Ontario—I go back to this report that came out on Friday of last week; 31,000 jobs disappeared—full-time jobs too—disappeared in the province.

Here's the story, again, from the Windsor Star that appeared. It says, "Welcome to Windsor. 'The Place to Be!' Unemployment Capital of Canada." The jobless rate is 9.9% in Windsor. So, yes, I understand why you would want to have some kind of a solution that would work to create jobs in southwestern Ontario. That makes sense. But the member from Peterborough who was up earlier this afternoon and speaking about the 14 or 16 different companies in his riding that have received money from the eastern Ontario development fund can boast an unemployment rate of 9.2% in Peterborough. The second-highest unemployment rate in all of Canada is in his riding in Peterborough. Clearly, the EODF isn't the silver bullet. It's not the be-all, end-all. It's not going to fix the

problems that our province is currently faced with, where we have extreme unemployment for 65 months now; five and a half years, unemployment exceeding the national average—never heard of before in the province of Ontario until this government took office.

My colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry knows extremely well how the EODF works. As my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound just described, he's been involved with the EODF for many years as a former mayor and now, as a member of provincial Parliament. I'm not exactly sure why his intentions were to come here to Queen's Park, but I believe it has to do with finding solutions that are going to make the province work again and become the powerhouse of Canada once again. He's on the right track. We need the government to get on the right track too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for his response.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to thank the people that spoke on my behalf from York West, Durham, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and Prince Edward–Hastings.

It's interesting, the member from York West talked about education. I'll just talk about post-secondary. I believe Ontario is the lowest contributor to post-secondary in the country. As well, the tuition rates are the highest in the country. I can tell you that from first-hand because I have three children: one that finished two years ago, one last year and one that's still going to school. It's expensive. Tuition in the engineering program was over \$8,000. I can appreciate what you have to pay, but when I look at Quebec, and they're less than 50% of what we're paying here—so there are alternatives.

We talked about the ringing of the bells. I go back to what people in my riding are saying: "You've got to do something to slow this government down, something to stop the spending." Their biggest question is, "What happened? How could this government get back in after its record?"

1740

I know we weren't ringing the bells to slow down this government's spending, but maybe that was a benefit that we didn't see when we came up with what we thought would be a fair plan to put a little pressure on for this committee.

They've got to start looking at where they're throwing the money around. You've got to wonder—it's like throwing spaghetti against the wall to see if it sticks. Obviously, we can see from some of these unemployment numbers that they aren't.

People will go back—if you run a wise household where you can actually retire with a good retirement—it's about spending wisely. More important is what you don't spend. I think that that is a lesson we have to learn here. It's public money; it's not ours. We want to make sure we use it wisely.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I've been waiting patiently all day to speak to this bill. I've been here since 1 o'clock, listening earnestly to this debate from all sides of the House. The NDP have spoken, the Liberals have spoken, and colleagues on my side of the House from Chatham–Kent–Essex, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Prince Edward–Hastings, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and finally, good old Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound have had the opportunity to share our views.

I respect the views of each person in this House. We obviously look at very different things from very different perspectives. I think what we've seen here today is that the Conservatives have very much said this is where we're at. We're looking at it from the perspective of where are we today, what is the reality of our world we're living in, and what do we need to be doing, all in the context of what this bill's supposed attempts are supposed to be.

Mr. Speaker, I ran for office because I care about the future for my boys, my sons Zach and Ben. I put almost everything that comes through this House through that filter: Will this be beneficial to them, or will it not be beneficial to them? Is this a good idea that's going to benefit them and their colleagues and all of the children of the people in this House, or not? This bill, to me, does nothing to remotely help my sons down the road. In fact, as I've said numerous times today, more than anything it's a wedge issue. It's not really going to do the things that I believe they're purporting it to do.

I kind of take a thought process like this: If we didn't have 600,000 people unemployed—31,000 just in the month of May, and we're adding 2,000 last week from GM, and 60,000 more from the horse racing industry not too far down the road. If we didn't have that many people unemployed, we mightn't need handouts and this seat-saver, seat-buying program, and this would all be moot.

If we didn't have the highest energy rates in North America—not just in Canada, but in the whole continent—46% and rising is what those rates are, and they're predicted to go even higher. We're actually paying the US and Quebec almost half a billion dollars of our taxpayers' hard-earned money to support their industry and give them—with a bonus and a red ribbon tied on. That's unconscionable. If we didn't do that, we might not have to be in a position to do this seat-saver, seat-buyer program.

If we didn't have some of the highest tax rates in the world, we might have more businesses, not less, and we wouldn't need to, again, prop them up and entice them with these sweet deals. I believe my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings was able to recount the fact that 92% of the dollars in the eastern Ontario development fund went to Liberal-held ridings and their projects.

If we didn't have a \$15.3-billion deficit, heading towards a \$411-billion debt that they've accumulated in eight years in office; if we had equity as a province; if we actually had money in the bank that we could spend, we might actually be able to look at this in a different light.

Earlier I talked a little bit about why we in the government are looked at as having to provide funding for new

businesses or expanding businesses. We have private lenders, and I must congratulate our Canadian banking system, because we are one of the countries that have come through this economic downturn relatively well. Thank goodness for them and that they had practices and protocols in place to protect all of us. I would suggest that it might be good and conducive for the government on the other side of the House to take a look at some of those protocols and not allow themselves to continue to overspend, and we mightn't be having some of these discussions.

If we had hope; if we had a thriving economy where business drives the economy and government provides the environment and the guideline and the regulation and gets out of the way, then again, I don't think we would be having these discussions, and we wouldn't have to be deemed to be the group that has to give the handouts.

This is a fundamental, core, principal premise that our party is working from: You cannot continue to dole out \$15.3 billion more than you actually take in. I would be remiss if I didn't say that in the last number of years, we've had higher than normal revenues. We've had the highest revenues we've ever had, and yet they're still running up structural deficits. And yet they come with programs like this, espousing to help those businesses and help those areas of our jurisdictions that we come from. It's nothing more than a wedge issue. If we had money in the bank, we would be looking at this in a totally different thought process.

I want to just make sure, before I leave this point, that if we were to do it—and I believe my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings raised this—why are we doing this patchwork quilt? Why do places like Barrie, Muskoka, Hamilton, Durham and even the GTA not have a development fund? Why do we pick and choose? Why are we not doing a province-wide solution for a province-wide issue? It really, really concerns me that we're continually being divisive and trying to—we hear the rhetoric on the other side of the House: “We have to work together. We have to pull together and be collaborative.” This is not collaborative policy-making.

Speaker, I will, and I did before, earlier today, go on record saying—and I'll make it very clear—I'll be the first person fighting, kicking, screaming and hollering to ensure that Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound gets its fair share if this development fund goes forward. That's the right thing to do. It's no different than lots of people say in the solar industry—“Why would I not go and put my hand out if they're stupid enough to pay me those kind of rates?” You can't argue that logic from a business decision, and I'm no different. I'll be there every day of the week making sure that we get our fair share—and it won't be a 92%, like it unfortunately happened in Prince Edward–Hastings, for Liberal-held projects.

But my concern is, we can't play those games. We need to be honest with the taxpayers of Ontario. We need to ensure that we are using their dollars—and let's not forget, this isn't Liberal dollars we're spending; this is taxpayer of Ontario dollars. We need to ensure we're

spending every single dollar with a value and an output coming out the other end so that we can stand here proudly and say, “I made the right decision.” This is not going to take us in that direction. It's just unfortunate that we want to keep playing these games of rhetoric; we want to play the spin-doctoring and gamesmanship when we're in such dire fiscal situations.

Speaker, I asked before in this House, and I'll ask it again—most of our country has been founded on, someone comes up with a great idea. The entrepreneurial spirit has driven our province and, in fact, our country forward. Someone has an idea, they go out and say, “Hey, I think I can sell this to the people, the consumers of our area,” and they find a way to finance that. Typically, you go through a lending institution. Very quickly, someone from the NDP or the Liberals, when I last broached this subject, jumped up and said, “But the banks won't lend to small business.” Well, what have you done for the last eight years to change that environment? What have you done to help those small businesses who are going to be the driver of our economy? The large manufacturing business has, for the most part, moved on. That's a different decade. The bulk of our economic engine now is going to be small and mid-size business. So I suggest, rather than debating this bill that does absolutely nothing other than create wedges and make it sound good in 30-second sound bites, why aren't we debating that? What can we do to work collaboratively with our banking institutions to ensure we have opportunities for our small businesses?

Why do we need these grants? We've become, again—everybody, my riding included—“Mr. Walker, can you get me some government money?” Well, you know what? I show them the picture. There's \$15.3 billion that we're paying interest on right now; \$10 billion, our third largest expenditure. Most of the people that I speak to the first time have no idea that's the fiscal mess we're in. So why are we not doing things to get that number down? Typically, to the NDP, they're always concerned about the programs that we're not providing for people. Well, just think what we could do program-wise in this province if we weren't spending \$10 billion on just the interest payment alone.

Speaker, we need to get our heads out of the sand. We need to fess up when we mess up, as one of my colleagues certainly says.

Mr. John O'Toole: Fess up.

Mr. Bill Walker: Fess up and mess up.

Speaker, if they would put half as much effort into clearing the red tape, the bureaucracy, the administration that we put on our current businesses—I have a number of businesses in my riding right now that have come to me and said, “Mr. Walker, we need to make some changes. We cannot get through the layers of bureaucracy to keep our business going, and if we don't do that”—they're getting answers like, “We'll get back to you in 12, 14, 16, 18 months with an answer.” What business can thrive and survive if they have to wait 14 months for an environmental approval? It's ludicrous.

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We have to change our thought process. The old days are gone, when we had tons of money sitting in the bank. We're not the economic engine anymore, sadly, and we don't have surpluses sitting in our bank account. We're in a big, big black hole—I would like to say red. We need to change the way we think. We can't continue—

Hon. John Milloy: You say red—

Mr. Bill Walker: I will say red because there's a lot of red ink bleeding, dripping by the pailfuls, unfortunately, Mr. House leader. It's scary. Yet you show no concern for that. An austerity budget that's bleeding red ink, and you still add 14 ministries with increased spending—unbelievable.

Hon. John Milloy: And horse racing: You're in favour of that. What about horse racing?

Mr. Bill Walker: You are absolutely correct: I'm in favour of horse racing because there's 60,000 jobs. We have 600,000 people out of work and you're going to add 60,000 in rural Ontario? Maybe you should come and visit one of our racetracks, Mr. House leader on the opposite side.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: You keep talking; you're helping me out every day you say that, because the people in my riding understand how critical this is to our economy—to not take them for granted, not pay attention to them and show them disrespect by not even inviting them to the table before you bring in your so-called collaborative stakeholder consultations—thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to continue on. I'm supposed to be bringing everything through you and not debating, so I apologize for that. But Mr. Speaker, it's very important, I believe, that we start looking at this from a perspective of, what are we doing as 107 elected people to get our province back on the rails, to ensure we become again the economic driver of Canada and have policies, processes and protocols in place that are going to ensure that we have new businesses wanting to come to Ontario? We have businesses that want to expand in Ontario. We have people who will come from other parts of the world. But you know what? They're starting to go, "Why would I go to Ontario? Why would I do that when it's the highest taxes," when we've got the highest energy rates, when we've got 600,000 people employed? Why would we not go to Manitoba or—goodness gracious, not Alberta? That's almost a sin word for people on the other side of the House because Alberta has actually got a thriving economy which—let's not forget, we are a huge supplier to that industry, and that might be our opportunity to get out of this hole they've dug us into, but not if we keep discrediting them and using those types of tactics and ploys.

This morning, Monte McNaughton from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex made a very convincing argument. He said, "Why do we not support this bill?" I may be paraphrasing, but at the end of the day, it comes down to principles. We have debt and deficit that we've never seen in our province or in our country. Ontario is going

to soon have more debt than the rest of Confederation if we don't soon make some bold, drastic decisions. We need to be talking about those things, not bills like this that are just wedging more regions against regions. He talked about job woes, and I've already talked about that: 600,000 people unemployed—2,000 people from GM and 60,000 from the horse racing industry that will soon be on the dole, which is unfortunate. We cannot continue to go there.

Another principle: increased spending. Again, in good conscience, with my children—my boys are 15 and 18. They're soon going to be out in the world, fending for themselves. Mr. Walker doesn't have the money to pay for them. I don't have that huge bank account that someone else is paying for to just say, "Yes, you go and do whatever you want, boys. It will all be good. It will be rose-coloured glasses, and we're wonderful." I'm being very frank with them. I'm telling them to take deficit financing 101 in school, and that's what some of the members on the opposite side should be doing as well, I think, because they obviously don't understand that fundamental of you can't continue adding to the debt.

We had revenues of \$35 billion last year, I believe, and expenditures of over \$45 billion. I'm not a mathematician, I didn't take accounting in school, but I know in my own household, if I just break those numbers—a lot of people can't get this "billion" stuff. That's just too far out there, way too many zeroes. But let's break it down to \$350 and \$450. Week after week, month after month, you can't bring in \$350, spend \$450 and keep your house afloat or your car loan afloat or your school loans afloat. You need to make responsible, diligent decisions and live within your means. This government is not doing that. This bill is going to add, again—they're using the "\$20 million" number, but over the years, it's about \$160 million, dollars that we don't have in our bank account to write the cheque. We're going to these young people in front of you and saying, "Hope you're okay with it, but we're going to mortgage your future and probably your grandchildren's future just because we want to be able to say, 'Everything is all right. It's going to be all right. We're good. We're going to add more programs and we're going to add more money wherever you need it.'"

Do they ever say no, except when we have a good idea? That's the only time I hear them saying no.

Speaker, we talk a fair bit in here, as well, about—this bill is not really even required. My understanding—I wasn't here; I'm a newbie. I just came on October 6, 20,011—2011, sorry. I thought it was a Liberal thing there. I just—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Exponential.

I'm told that the eastern development fund was implemented without a bill having to be brought to this House and debated the way we are today. So if it was such a good thing and it's so great for southwestern Ontario, why would this government, which is continually

accused by us of never taking action and getting anything done to help our province, not have just implemented it? Why would they bring it into this House and have to go through all of this, when we have things back-logged beyond belief that we don't ever get to? Why are we spending hours and hours and hours about this? If it's such a good thing, I would actually respect them more if they just said, "We're going ahead."

They didn't seem to want to stop and debate anything about the horse racing industry. They're not really consulting with the doctors' community right now. They've walked away from the table. They've said, "There are two ways to do things: my way and my way. Thanks for coming out, by the way." They're doing it with the teachers. This isn't consultation. This isn't doing the things that we need to do as a province when we use those rhetorical words of "collaboration" and "working in partnership."

What we need, Speaker, is some honesty and some sincerity. We need to actually debate the true issues that are going to have a huge impact on what our future is going to be for our kids and grandkids.

Why are we not talking more about the things that they need to have done, or not to have done, for the last eight years, instead of bringing in a bill like this, which is really just rehashing and creating wedge issues?

I go on record again to say it is a wedge issue, from that whole premise I just spoke about. This could be done and gone and the money there. If you've got all this money sitting in the bank, why isn't it out helping these small businesses that you purport to be not helping the way we're doing it? Why aren't you out doing it? Why aren't you cutting some of the ABCs—over 600 administrations out there that I believe are not adding value in every single place. We have committed already—my friend Todd Smith from Prince Edward-Hastings is prepared to go across this province to talk to the groups and organizations and find out what's providing value and not providing value.

Those are the things we should be debating. Why are we continuing to pay for administration and bureaucracy that provides absolutely no value—as opposed to this bill, which, to my knowledge, is not going to do much of anything?

I point your attention, Mr. Speaker, because I know someone over there will say I'm negative because I'm bringing out reality—difference of words, difference of interpretation. Reality is where we are today and how we view the world.

I will say, though, on a positive note, I do like the fact—and I believe our colleague across the floor, in his rendition, stated that he believes that MPPs of any political stripe and colour, when there's an announcement made by government, should be there, and I 100% fully respect and support that. I just wish every member would do that, because we are all elected equally by the people of our respective ridings. So that piece that section 3 of the act sets out, I believe that.

What I do have some concerns with—and it's typical of many of these types of things. There's not a lot in the detail—a whole bunch of the broad-brush at the top; "We'll get back to you with the details." These appointments for the boards: Do we have any control over that, that it won't be non-partisan, so that we don't have a situation like Prince Edward-Hastings referred to, that 92% of funds were doled out to Liberal-friendly projects?

Speaker, we need to be accountable to the people of Ontario. We have a lot of empathy in the world—sorry; apathy, not empathy. We probably need some empathy. We have a lot of apathy in the world, where people are saying, "I'm not going to go out and vote because what does it matter? Those people are all not there for the right reasons. They're padding their own backyards, they're setting up these schemes, they're wasting billions of dollars—the Oakville gas plant, the Mississauga gas plant, the eHealth boondoggle."

How do we give them faith? We give them faith when we do things right. We put the partisan stuff aside and say, "Look, let's come together," like the rhetorical words, "and let's work together." Let's ensure that we're actually taking ideals and ideas and we're putting action plans in place that are actually going to move them forward; we're going to cut debt, we're going to reduce spending because that's the right thing to do; we're going to have an action plan to create jobs; we're not going to go back to 15 more panels and add more study and add more paperwork; we're not going to bring in people like Don Drummond, a hand-picked expert, who gave them a blueprint—they could call it a red print if they feel the need—but a blueprint of how things will actually go forward so that we get out of the debt hole that they put us in.

Over eight years, they've doubled the debt of the rest of our entire history, Speaker. So we need to ensure that when we're looking at these types of things, we're not just glossing over the rhetorical spin, we're not just side-stepping, like certain people on the other side of the House do when there's a real issue, such as the Ornge select committee that we tried to get for so long so we can actually get to the bottom of those scandals and put protocols in place so that they never, ever happen again and put the people of Ontario in an unsafe position and in a spot where their safety could be minimized.

Speaker, this bill is just a bunch of paper, like so many that come forward. We're wasting enormous amounts of time talking about it. I've spent probably in this House today close to an hour talking about this, with all the time put together. You know what? The principle is—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Exactly.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm glad you respect it, member on the other side, because I always listen intently to you, so thank you for your opinion.

You know what? That's the challenge. Rather than saying, "Let's come together and let's find some common ground," and moving forward with actual actions that are going to get this province out of the hole they've dug us into, they want to spin that type of stuff.

Well, I'm not here for that. I'm here to ensure that we do the right things. I will not support this bill, because it doesn't do the three fundamental things that we've been principled about: It doesn't create jobs with a credible plan that's action-oriented; it doesn't reduce spending, which we definitely have to do when we're \$15.3 billion in debt; and it doesn't reduce the debt over the long term

or the short term, to ensure that our kids and grandkids have a future to look forward to. Thank you, Speaker.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
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McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
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Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

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Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
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O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
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First Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 40^e législature

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Tuesday 12 June 2012

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 12 juin 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 12 June 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 12 juin 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OPERATOR ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ D'EXPLOITATION DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 7, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité pour fusionner la Société indépendante d'exploitation du réseau d'électricité et l'Office de l'électricité de l'Ontario, modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to pick up where I left off on June 7, I believe. To the viewer, I was giving a complete breakdown, from the Macdonald commission to where we are today.

I have the privilege in my riding of having three academic people who are experts in the area, plus a couple of former deputy ministers who have helped me understand this file. As I said before, let's not be fooled. Tell us where we are today, and this will set it for the future. The real facts are that Premier McGuinty has pretty well ruined the entire electricity system in Ontario.

When I say that, the proof is in the price. At the end of the day, right now, the energy board and others have commented on the price of energy. The price of energy is up 46% in Ontario. It's completely unacceptable. How do I know this? In fact, one of the things they introduced was a 10% rebate on seniors' hydro bills. Really, what that is is an admission that they'd gone too far, too fast, on price. The consumers in all our ridings—and if they're not saying so, they're not listening to their consumers—are struggling when they open their hydro bill.

What's really important, to bring it up to date: Tim Hudak and our critic Vic Fedeli—we've had some pretty important consultations to develop a draft paper. The draft paper the viewer should look up is *Paths to Prosperity*. It's a fundamental difference of opinion between them and us, but it has, I think, five or six extremely important points for discussion. That's what this discussion paper is about. In the few minutes that I have left, I'm just going to run through a couple of them.

One is to monetize Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One. That's probably bringing public sector pensions into a very stable investment environment. I would suspect that less than 50% of that would be in public ownership, to the extent that it would be owned by public sector pensions.

Proposal number two is to abolish the 33% transfer tax to change cost efficiency of consolidations of the LDCs, the local distribution companies. I believe that process is sort of under way right now, in fact. I was talking to the Minister of Energy yesterday. He didn't say the goal was to have fewer of them, but that's clearly what the plan is.

Here's another one: Establish a new power rate for manufacturing and resource-based industries, like mining and pulp and paper, and those industries that are struggling. It's amazing. This morning, I believe the Minister of Energy as well as the Minister of Economic Development, Mr. Bentley and Mr. Duguid, are going to make an announcement very similar to this. They're going to come up with an industrial hydro rate. I have it on good authority that's going to happen this morning.

But this is what they do: They copy all of Tim Hudak's ideas. We want the right amount of power in the right place at the right time at the right price. All I can say is this: The power rate in the McGuinty government is a social policy. A power rate under a Tim Hudak government would be an economic policy. That's the meddling that has caused such grief in the system today—not to mention the unfortunate dilemma we find ourselves in with the whole global adjustment. People should look up the global adjustment and realize that industry in Ontario now is paying an exorbitant rate. What is it? It's the shortfall between the cost of energy and the price they're paying for the FIT energy. This is a file that has been so mixed up and screwed up—pardon my language; I hope that's in order—messed up, I can say, that they should actually withdraw what they've done and have a look at this proposal, this white paper.

The idea of Bill 75 is to merge the OPA and the IESO. We said in our election document that we'd get rid of the OPA—a complete waste of bureaucrats—toast. It's

saving money and saving the taxpayers and saving the electricity system of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I listened to my friend from Durham very carefully. Having had the opportunity to be the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, we all are aware—I do have Bill 75 here. Take a look at Bill 75. We're aware that on any given day in the province of Ontario we need 14,700 megawatts of baseload capacity—principally Darlington, Pickering and Bruce, the run-of-the-river, of course, at Beck and lower Temagami, those other opportunities.

I have always consulted widely on electricity, because of the great work that is done by the Peterborough Utilities services, one of the largest municipally owned public utilities in the province of Ontario. I would consult with the former CEO, Bob Lake; Larry Doran, who is a former vice-president of the old Ontario Hydro; and of course John Stephenson, who is the current CEO of Peterborough Utilities services. Plus we have GE Hitachi in Peterborough, and GE's long tradition in the nuclear industry, and indeed the run-of-the-river development. They provide great insight. They've all provided insight on Bill 75 as a way to move forward.

The OPA, which has traditionally looked after the demand management file, is looking forward to the future and looking at the IESO, which is frankly like the general sitting in front of a grid in Maple, Ontario, looking at all the generators that are going on in terms of producing electricity, and matching demand and supply on any given day. There's an opportunity to have a great discussion on this file.

I just want to note on Darlington, it's interesting when you look at the debt profile of Darlington, which I have. The debt that was issued in 1979, 1980 and 1981 by the old Ontario Hydro were the long-term Ontario Hydro bonds. The rate of interest on those, you may want to know, is 19%, 20%, 21%, for 50 years, held by all the major banks—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions? The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, a lovely place, Speaker. It's my pleasure to comment on my colleague from Durham, Mr. O'Toole, on his address on Bill 75. This gentleman understands the electricity sector as well as anybody in this House. He was energy critic for a long time, and he also is home to the Darlington nuclear facility here in the Clarington district, so he understands this sector. What he talks about is exactly right. The failure of this government is what he talks a lot about, in fact not just on this bill, but on a lot of other bills.

When you look at Bill 75—and I'm going to have a chance to speak to this a little later myself, Madam Speaker—you really have to ask yourself, boy, are they on their game, these folks? You know, the game of deflection: When most people are asking themselves, "Why do we have the OPA?" asking themselves, "Why

do we have this \$400-million organization that started out as a virtual agency? Why does it even exist here in the province of Ontario?"—the government knows they're under a lot of heat for the mess that they've perpetrated on the people of Ontario with their screwball electricity policies that have driven up the price of hydro and driven industries out of this province, shut down jobs in this province, yet they persist, because they are so far down that road that they don't know how to escape it themselves. They know it's wrong—they know it's wrong—but they can't reverse course, because you know a Liberal cannot admit that they're wrong. All you've got to do, Madam Speaker, is look at Ornge. All you've got to do is look at Ornge and say, "Can a Liberal admit when they have messed up?" The answer is unequivocally no, and that's what we've got here with Bill 75.

0910

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's very early in the morning, but I was listening to the member from Durham very carefully, and the last speaker as well. I have to say that what is being proposed—it is time. But what's most important is, we have to realize that the time has come to have a good look at how to do it properly. Other members at different times, of different governments, decided overnight without any consultation, and they went ahead and did it. They would come back into this House week after week, trying to sell bits and pieces, and at the end, they spent five years. They ruined the situation and nothing happened.

At least we are saying, "We're going to do it and we're going to do it right. We're going to take our time and we're going to do it right. We're going to do consultation, we're going to see what is the best thing for the people of Ontario, and that's what is going to happen."

I think the members on the opposite side agree that something should be done. I was here at a time when—I remember my friend Mike Harris and the then minister. They were trying to split it. They were trying to cut it. They were trying to sell it. "What do you want to sell? Which part? What piece?" At the end, they created a real mess and nothing happened.

Because of that particular time, Speaker—I remember you were here—we had that wonderful day called the blackout. We all remember and we don't want to go into that again. We said, "We are going to clean up the air as well," so we started closing the coal-burning generation stations.

We are going to do it, but there is a way of doing it. We understand what is right. We believe in consultation and this is what's going to happen. That's how we're going to do it, and we're going to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments or questions?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's great to speak to Bill 75 today, another meaningless bill coming from the Liberal government. This is a bill that I believe is intended to save some money, and \$25 million is what is saved as a result

of this bill when this government has increased the cost of electricity for our consumers by much, much more than that.

It's interesting to note that the member across the way talked about the fact that they're phasing out coal-fired power plants. We haven't had a single coal-fired power plant phased out by this government in nine years, and that's nine years of promising to do just that. Yesterday, here in Toronto, we had another smog day. We've had four smog days already this year in the province of Ontario, and you claim that you're cleaning up the air. Well, you're not doing a very good job, and you're certainly not doing a very good job at managing the fiscal responsibilities of the Ontario government. It's been a complete disaster.

As I pointed out a couple of times yesterday in talking to another bill, Bill 11, in May we lost 31,000 full-time jobs in the province of Ontario. There are a number of reasons for that, but one of the big reasons for that is the cost of electricity, which has soared under this government. The Minister of Energy, Chris Bentley, is here, and he's watched hydro rates soar because of an unaffordable FIT program that's producing huge subsidies. It's paying out huge subsidies to producers. At the same time, while it's paying out huge subsidies to green energy projects, it's cancelling million-dollar—perhaps even billion-dollar—power plants in Oakville and Mississauga.

This is the strategy that this government has? This is a failed strategy. The whole thing is a debacle, it's an embarrassment, it's an energy boondoggle, and it's time that this government woke up and started to make some significant changes to the pattern they have taken. It's driving manufacturers out of the province of Ontario. They're going to the United States, many different states, where the power is cheaper. It used to be the cheapest place in North America to produce right here in Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Durham has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I very much appreciate the member from Peterborough, also a good friend. But when he mentioned the Beck tunnel, it just typifies the scandalous waste in this government's project. Look at the numbers on the Beck project. The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is right on many things. He was a very successful energy critic, as our party is. Our party believes it's an economic policy, as opposed to a social policy. The member from York West was agreeing, we need change—but not the way you're changing it. But also, the member from Prince Edward-Hastings put it all together: Really, this is about jobs and the economy, and they've got it wrong. We're shedding jobs. One of the reasons is this failed energy policy.

It's not just me saying it. Just this past week—I'm going to read this, and people will—this is a quiz. Here's the quote; I want to start by introducing it. When you hear the name George Smitherman, remember eHealth, remember the Green Energy Act, and remember the

Omge helicopter scandal. He was in charge of all of them, and all of them are failed policies. So here's one here; this is a quote: "When the" Green Energy Act "was introduced the" McGuinty "government said that fostering a 'culture of conservation' was just as important as increasing the amount of renewable energy. But three years after its passage, many of the bill's conservation promises remain unfulfilled," and some completely abandoned. That's Gord Miller, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, in his report from last week. They haven't saved one electron; they've probably squandered it all.

The real bottom line here is, be prepared for a government that has lost its focus. In fairness, it's in its third term. It really shouldn't be in its third term, but that's a whole other discussion. I would say this: They have tried, and they have failed.

The real issue here is, without a plan for the future, including renewable energy—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I think the member from Durham has it right: We do have a failed energy policy in place, and it began a long time ago. That's something that the Conservatives don't want to speak about, nor my good friend from Durham, because the failed energy policy started a long time ago. The thing is that once the Conservatives are in opposition, they say, "Stop talking about the past. Focus on the present." I understand that; I do.

We used to have what was called Ontario Hydro. Everybody understood it. It was called Ontario Hydro. There was no confusion about its role. It provided hydro at affordable rates both to serve the citizens of Ontario and to serve our manufacturing industry, on which we depend. It was simple.

When mon ami Mike Harris got elected—God bless—he changed everything around. He turned everything upside down. He wanted to create a market system out of hydro. He felt Ontario hydro was simply too public and too inefficient and, lo and behold, he creates a privatized market. Out of that came all these different names of different functions in Ontario Hydro. He created Hydro One, he created the electricity system operator, he created some other board, whose name escapes me. Then the Liberals came along and say, "No, we've got to try to fix that," and they created the Ontario Power Authority.

So many different bodies doing different things. The public is so utterly confused about who does what, when and how. Imagine that I can't even remember the fourth body, entity, that was created by the previous regime. There's just so many. How do you keep track?

Lo and behold, my Conservative friends all of a sudden say, "We have too many of these bodies." That's why I keep saying, "God bless." They create the mess, and then they say, "We need to solve the mess," and it goes back and forth. It's just like bankers: They create the mess and then they say, "You need us to help solve the mess," and on and on it goes. Like bankers, they

create the mess, and then they say, "But you need us to solve the mess," and on and on.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What about Amazon hydro? Tell us about it.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Mon ami John Yakabuski from—it's such a long, long riding—Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. My good friend.

Interjection.

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: You will have an opportunity for two minutes soon. Don't rush. Take your time.

It used to be so simple. Yes, Darlington was a huge mistake, first of all because some of us believe that nuclear isn't entirely safe—and, by the way, Minister, it ain't cheap. If you'll recall, Darlington was started by the Tories, completed by the Liberals, and then we land on to it in 1990. It was created by both of you—14 billion bucks. Think about that number. My little mind just can't fathom those big numbers; it just doesn't, because it's just a little mind, right? But 14 billion bucks—we're still paying for it; since 1989 to this day, we're still paying for Darlington. Something is wrong with that. I know it's a long time ago and whatever the Tories did is irrelevant now. I understand that. But could they not have just warned us a little bit and said, "By the way, this is going to cost you, citizens and taxpayers"—because Tories love to talk about taxpayers. Taxpayers are on the hook and have been on the hook forever, and it's not safe and it's really costly.

So we had Hydro One, simple to understand, and then Mike Harris privatizes the system.

Mr. John Yakabuski: So should we shut it down, Rosie? Tomorrow? Next week?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Member from Renfrew, please. You'll have two minutes in a second, or at least in 15 minutes or so.

You privatized the system because you said, "No, we have to let the private market get in because they know how to do it better." Oh, yes, the private sector knows how to do it better. I can tell you what they know how to do better. They know how to take money from the taxpayers and the citizens of Ontario. They know how to take money and put it in their pockets. They love that. Tories love the private sector when they take the citizens' money out of their pockets.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member to speak to the bill.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's absolutely connected to the bill, Madam Speaker. Everything I've said is connected to the bill. Why else would I be saying these things? I do, from time to time, reach deep into the recesses of history as a way of making these links, because without the connection to history you wouldn't understand why we are here, Madam Speaker, through you to the others. When people have a sense of that history, they remember. They say, "Yes, my God, it did start then, didn't it?" It started in 1995 when they, the fine Tories of the time, decided a privatized system works, that to put electricity on the spot market was the way to go,

connected to markets and the vagaries of markets—the vagaries of markets that do well for the private sector but not for the citizens of Ontario.

Prices shot through the roof. Why? Because every little private sector that had a piece of it wanted a piece of it for their own gain. No one talks about that in the Conservative ranks, and no one talks about that from the Liberal ranks either. Money is being sifted away, taken out to be given to those who will profit from public power, something our former leader, Howard Hampton, used to talk about. Ontario Hydro was about public power, public in the sense that it belonged to the people of Ontario, public in the sense that we wanted hydro to be produced at affordable rates for the people of Ontario. When you don't have somebody making money out of it, that's when you make it more affordable.

When we call for the elimination of many of these boards—Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator—we think and we thought that that was good, and that's why we pushed for it years ago. Howard Hampton, our leader, did that for many, many years, when he pointed out that all these multiple entities are simply sucking up so much energy, and money to boot. Then the Tories followed suit and they thought it was a good idea to merge some of these bodies. Merging these two entities New Democrats believe is a good thing.

There are some problems that I think are negatives, and they're connected to the merger of these two bills because something else is happening. The merger allows for clarity, for better efficiencies and for savings, because you don't have two different entities making loads of money doing different things. There are savings to be had, and we agree with that. New Democrats believe there are savings to be had, and we agree with that. But the government is doing something else in the bill that we think has negatives that need to be debated and need to be sent to committee for discussion and clarity.

The way they've gone about doing the bill, it removes the independent planning and review required by the present supply planning regime. This is something the NDP does not support. I would like the Liberals to speak to this idea of what has happened to that independent planning and review.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: But you wanted it to be simpler.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You wanted it to be simpler.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're quite right. But we don't want the independent planning and review to disappear. You will agree with that, Minister, I think.

Those are the matters that we want to talk about, the merger to form the Ontario Electricity System Operator—look how difficult it is just to pronounce these names. You can't even get it out of your lips, so difficult they are. We are creating now the Ontario Electricity System Operator. You, good citizens: You figure it out. It's a good idea, but we feel strongly that by eliminating

what's called the integrated power system plan—yet another acronym, IPSP; look at all these acronyms. The government is eliminating the current integrated power system plan, which gives the public an opportunity to be able to participate in the energy planning process.

The involvement of citizens, the involvement of their environmental groups, is greatly reduced by its elimination. "Why is the government doing that?" is the question that New Democrats have and that citizens who are following this particular merger have raised with us, and I'm sure they've raised it with you as well. The government hasn't spoken to this yet that I am aware of.

Bill 75 removes the Ontario Power Authority's power and duty to develop an integrated power system plan for approval by the Ontario Energy Board, and the Ontario Energy Board's power and duty to review that plan for economic prudence, cost effectiveness and regulatory compliance. The integrated power system plan is now replaced by the ministerial energy plans—which sounds good, because if the minister is doing them, one would say, "It must be okay." The problem is, it's a question of who is in power. You might have good people in that position who might want to do the right thing, but you never know who's going to be there from time to time.

"So when the minister is now in control and is the one who has control of the energy plan, what happens?" is the question we ask. The minister must consult with the Ontario Energy Board on the impact of the energy plan on consumers, electricity bills and on methods of managing that impact. The minister must also refer the plan to the Ontario Energy Board for a review of the estimated capital costs in the plan, in accordance with the referral. This is what we say is a far cry from the independent review—my God, these names—of the IPSP by the Ontario Energy Board that is presently required. It deprives the stakeholders of the ability to test in a proceeding before the Ontario Energy Board the government's energy and procurement plans and the consequent effects of those plans on rates.

By removing the Ontario Energy Board explicitly in the energy planning process, Bill 75 blurs the distinction between the functions of the OESO and the Ontario Energy Board. The OESO is the new Ontario Electricity System Operator. You people have to just really pay close attention to these functions because I forget them, and I have to keep referring to all these different bodies.

0930

The NDP is worried about the merger of these functions under one roof. For example, the Ontario Power Authority currently has the responsibility to make and implement procurement processes for the integrated power system plan, and the Independent Electricity System Operator's regulation of market participants includes potential parties to the Ontario Power Authority procurement. Therein lies the potential for conflict of interest. How does the government deal with the fact that these two functions are under the same roof, managed by one operator? We think it's possible to separate the two, but it's probably not that easy, and we want the government

to comment on how they're going to be able to do that. The minister understands this and does say that he or she will take back the responsibility for procurement decisions, and then adds that "The board of directors of the OESO is required to ensure that there is an effective separation of functions and activities of the OESO relating to its market operations and its procurement and contract management activities. The OESO is prohibited from conducting itself in a manner that could unduly advantage or disadvantage any market participant or any party to a procurement contract or interfere with, reduce or impede a market participant's non-discriminatory access to transmission systems or distribution systems. The board of directors is also required to ensure that confidentiality is maintained." However, this new entity will still have the power and responsibility to implement the minister's procurement decisions. It is not immediately clear how the board of directors of the OESO will keep these conflicting functions separate without in effect keeping the two former organizations separate under one roof.

These are some of the conflicts that we believe need to be sorted out by the government and need to be sorted out in committee. What we need are plenty of public hearings to hear what the environmentalists, in particular, have to say about the loss of the independent review. Without that, we feel we could be committing an error as we do something good. As we merge these two bodies we could, by either intentional or unintentional purposes, create problems that we need to deal with. I'm not quite sure whether the minister knows that or he feels that somehow these two functions can be dealt with appropriately under this new board, but we don't see that yet. So if the minister has a better sense of how we can separate these two functions so that we do not create a conflict of interest, I would love to hear that.

Madam Speaker, these are the comments that I have. I know that our critic will have a lot more to say when he does his lead, but we wanted to be able to put this on the record for the moment. We think that by having the public hearings, some of this will be sorted out and the merger, in the end, will be a public good for all.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Mario Sergio: It was a pleasure to listen, as it always is, to my colleague the member from Trinity-Spadina. What we are dealing with today, Madam Speaker, is second reading of Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts. I think this is exactly what is being discussed today, and nothing else. Listening to the member from Trinity-Spadina, this is exactly what we are doing today. He's asking for expansive consultation, public consultation, to send it to a committee, and I think if we can move the bill from the House to do that, then we are on our way to providing the people of Ontario with a very transparent method of dealing with a very important issue.

This has been on the books for quite some time. It didn't begin with us today; this began years ago. As my friend says, let's delve into the past a little bit.

I have to say that this heading here is quite appropriate: "Cuts to Our Past Harm Our Future." Wow. If this had been a [inaudible] maybe 20 years ago, we would have said "Nuts." But looking at the past, today we are seeing how true it was, and all the cuts that were effected years and years ago we are paying for today.

We are paying, still, the so-called stranded debt. How did we accumulate the stranded debt? We are paying it today, and it is because of the cuts of yesterday, but we don't want to leave them anymore for tomorrow. So, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

The member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a chance to comment on Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, 2012. As you've heard, this bill is about joining a couple of agencies, the Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO, and the Ontario Power Authority.

Of course, we know that the Ontario Power Authority was a new agency created by the McGuinty government that was supposed to be a transitional agency, but as we now see, it has grown, so that it now has gone through some \$375 million in the last number of years. It has 87 people making over \$100,000 a year.

So our party's position is that we shouldn't be joining this with another agency; we should be just doing away with the Ontario Power Authority. We made that very clear in the past election. That's our policy: We should just do away with it and save all the money.

The issue that certainly you hear about if you're back in your riding is energy prices, and the huge driver of that is this government's feed-in tariff program, the green energy program, where they just come up with these crazy subsidies where they're paying so much for electricity that's really not playing any significant role in the electricity needs across the province, and you sure hear about it when you go around to your riding and talk to people who just don't understand why their electricity bills have gone up so dramatically under the McGuinty government.

Our solution to this debate today, though, is just to do away with the Ontario Power Authority. Don't join it with another agency.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always fun to listen to my friend from Trinity—Spadina. I think he did a very good job of delineating a fundamental ideological difference that exists in this House, and that is between the public ownership of necessities for the province and the people of Ontario and the privatization of those same necessities.

You know, there's a real myth about privatization—that it's more efficient. It's not, and we've proven it over and over again in this House. The recent example that

comes to mind is Ornge, of course, but there have been many over the years. Private is not cheaper, and it is not more efficient. In fact, when you think about it—I used to be in business—the very essence of business is to make a profit. Now, if you're going to charge the same, the profit has to come from somewhere, so you either dampen wages or the product you produce or the profit doesn't come. So an efficient public service is absolutely what we need.

For my friends on the right here, quite ideologically and also literally, all you have to do is look at a time in history when everything was private to see how that looks. And that time, we know very well, was the time of Charles Dickens. If you want to go that route, with child labour and everything else—I mean, that's libertarianism, truly. That's what it looks like. We've done that experiment and it failed—I think we can all agree on that—so obviously we need to move forward from that.

My friend delineated what are some of the problems in this way of moving forward, but the bottom line is, necessities should be public. That's our DNA in the NDP. From medicare to power, they should be public. Now, just because they're public doesn't mean they're efficient either, so obviously oversight has to happen.

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We have also been very critical of bodies like the LHINs, for example. We don't need new levels of bureaucracy; we don't need overpaid—and by overpaid public servants, I'm not talking about the people who are making \$60,000 a year; I'm talking about the people who are making \$6 million a year. Those should not exist.

That's where we stand, and I thank the member from Trinity—Spadina for delineating that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to the comments by the member for Trinity—Spadina. I think the most important thing that we can do in this discussion around electricity is actually move away from ideology altogether. What we want is a system that's well run and what we want is a system that's clean and efficient.

I can remember, when I was campaigning for the election in the fall of 2003, that the thing that was on people's minds most of all was power. The energy supply was not working; there were brownouts, blackouts; it was a very bad time for power in the province. I heard over and over again that we need more clean energy generation in Ontario. That was probably the thing I heard most frequently.

The first part of what I want to say is that we have moved on that. We have created a new culture of green energy and conservation in Ontario that was not here previously. I think that we've responded to what Ontarians were calling for.

The second piece that I want to talk about is this change that we're proposing here. The member for Trinity—Spadina talked about the complexity. He also talked about the desire—or certainly the third party has

talked about the desire—to have simplicity. You can't get rid of functions; functions have to land somewhere. So we have to be clear that the functions that are necessary go on.

In this scheme, the government will prepare the plan that the member for Trinity–Spadina was talking about, in broad consultation with experts with the new entity if we choose, but the plan will be prepared by the government. Then, the new entity, the OESO, as it's called in the bill, will be engaged in—

Mr. John Yakabuski: IESO.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, the new entity in the bill is the OESO. That new entity will be involved in the plan preparation—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

The member for Trinity–Spadina has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the Minister of Housing: The simplicity I was looking for was public power. It's not so much the confusion of language and entities that the Tories created, but rather the simplicity of having to produce power at rates that we can afford, where there is no private sector siphoning of money. That's the simplicity I was talking about. All the other stuff—I was just commenting on the creation of so many acronyms that are just so confusing for everybody. That's a different matter.

Moving away from ideology, it would be lovely to move away from a private market to a public power system, but we're not likely to have it. The Minister of Housing: What you created was, in addition to what they started, the Ontario Power Authority. You compounded the confusion by adding yet another entity into the mix. Yes, you've moved on by creating up to 2% of green energy, which New Democrats support, even though you've done it at feed-in tariffs that were so incredibly high that you got criticized, in some cases for good reason.

In relation to this bill, what you have done in Bill 75 is to eliminate the integrated power system plan, which gave the opportunity for public and stakeholder participation in energy planning. That is something you need to look at.

Further, although the short- and long-term forecasting functions of the IESO and the OPA should integrate well, it will be more difficult to integrate the Ontario Power Authority's planning and procurement functions with the Independent Electricity System Operator's responsibility to administer and enforce the market rules. We think you need to look at that in committee. That's why we want committees: because we want to be able to address the negatives, the fallout, of Bill 75.

On the whole, we support integration, because integration will not only make it easier for people to understand, but we're going to save money, and that's good for citizens.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to rise and speak this morning on Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, which, if passed, as you've heard already this morning, would amalgamate two of Ontario's electricity agencies—and as my colleague across the way has explained, two of the many.

First of all, it would amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator, which is known as the IESO—as the name implies, that's the system operator—and the Ontario Power Authority, or OPA, which is the system planner.

What does that mean? The IESO is the agency that is responsible for making the minute-to-minute, hour-by-hour decisions about how much generation we need at any one time, because the tricky thing about electricity is, you can't store it. As it's produced, you need to use it. So operating the system is very, very tricky because we, as consumers, change our usage hourly, daily, weekly, monthly.

If you pick a day in the middle of the winter, when the days are short and we turn the lights on early and leave them on through the morning because it's dark when we get up for breakfast, and we have all sorts of appliances and things that involve generating heat, we're burning electricity like mad. When we're in the spring and it's just nice, moderate weather, and when we're in the fall, we don't use as much electricity. When you get hot, steamy days like we've had the last few days, the electricity use goes way up again as everybody starts to turn on their air conditioners.

Operating the system is non-trivial. The system operator has to make decisions about the base supply, the nuclear generators and then bringing other generators in and out of the mix literally on a minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour basis. That's the function of the system operator.

The Ontario Power Authority is taking a more long-term view of things, which is, in order to satisfy that minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour demand, what generation do we need immediately? How much of it is base operation that's hydroelectric and nuclear that's there all the time? How much is electricity supply that we can turn on and off at a minute's notice as we need it? They have to think forward into the future to plan for the mix of generators that would be available.

It is true that the function of the OPA has increased, but that's because we have a much more diverse mix of energy generators now than we used to have. We now have all those green energy supplies. We have the wind, we have the solar, we have small hydroelectric. In Guelph, we actually have a closed landfill where we're capturing the gases coming from the closed landfill and using that to generate electricity. OPA, the planner, has a contract with the city to produce electricity from the gas from the old landfill. So, what OPA is doing has become much more complicated.

Nevertheless, the functions of the independent system operator and the OPA, the power authority, overlap somewhat, and we think we could make the whole system more efficient, save \$25 million, Madam Speaker, by

amalgamating those two functions and getting rid of the duplication, because there is definitely some duplication in carrying out those functions. There are some advantages in having those experts seated together as they do the planning and look at how we make sure that we have the right supply.

Some of the Conservatives across the way—the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member for Durham talked about the fact that if the Conservatives had their druthers, part of their plan is to get rid of the OPA. Think back to what I just said about the function of the OPA. It's the OPA that contracts for green energy: for wind, for solar, for small hydroelectric projects, for biogas, for all these new forms of energy that we have brought into the system. Getting rid of the OPA is code for getting rid of green energy, and we absolutely, totally disagree with that position.

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It's interesting, when the leader of the Conservatives came to Guelph a few weeks ago he had a breakfast meeting, and not too many people showed up. In fact, maybe they weren't even serving breakfast; I don't know. But the media reaction was interesting because one of the things he focused on was the Conservatives' energy plan, and my local media's reaction was, "What was he thinking? Why would you come to Guelph and talk about getting rid of green energy? Do you know how many jobs that creates in Guelph?" So he was totally dismissed by the local media.

At any rate, let's get back to the legislation that we're having a look at this morning, Madam Speaker. The proposed amalgamation is actually required because each of these bodies, the IESO and the OPA, was created with legislation. In order to do this amalgamation, we actually require this legislation to move forward. While this legislation is going through the process of second reading, committee hearings and third reading, those two entities will continue to operate as they do now, because that is the current state of the legislation in Ontario.

However, if the legislation is passed, some of the features of the legislation include outlining the governance structure of the proposed new independent—sorry; see, we all have trouble with the alphabet soup—the Ontario Electricity System Operator. It sets out the governance structure for that. The Ministry of Energy will continue to appoint the board of directors. The Minister of Energy will appoint the first executive officer or CEO, and then for subsequent rounds it will operate like a normal board of directors of other corporations, and the board of directors will select the new CEO.

There is a need, as my colleague from Trinity–Spadina pointed out, to maintain some independence in the functions, and in particular there will be a requirement to maintain independent market operations and to separate market operations from contract management with the various generators with whom we have contracts, big and small.

In terms of the energy planning process, there still will be a requirement for issuing energy plans, and those

would be approved by cabinet. The Ontario Energy Board, which is another member of the alphabet soup, will still continue to do its role. The Ontario Energy Board is responsible for reviewing rate proposals from all the various entities, and it also will be looking at the plan's capital costs. As the plans are tabled, the OEB will be responsible for reviewing the estimated capital costs that are involved in that.

We understand that the whole issue of electricity pricing is a very delicate matter. One doesn't want to have electricity priced so low that—we all think it's good to have things really, really low. The reality is, if the price is too low, people do not conserve energy. But we also know that if the price is too high, that can create economic difficulties for both families and businesses. This business of constraining the cost of electricity, we understand, is very important. We need to keep that at a reasonable cost. The amalgamation of the IESO and the OPA is one of the things we're doing to manage costs.

But that's not the only thing. We have been quite aggressive with two of the other members of the alphabet soup: Hydro One, which is responsible for transmission and distribution, the provincial transmission grid and, in some cases, local distribution in more rural parts of the province; and Ontario Power Generation, which owns and operates the big provincial generators—that would be the nuclear generators and the big hydroelectric plants at Niagara Falls and the coal-fired generators. We have been very aggressive with them in saying, "You must control your costs." Traditionally, those entities have not necessarily had that as their top priority, controlling costs. So far, I'm pleased to report that they have saved half a billion dollars, and we will be asking them to save more.

We have also had a very thorough review of the feed-in tariff program. This is the one where people who are going to produce green energy locally are guaranteed—have a contract for a certain amount for a fixed number of years.

I think we need to stop and take a look at what happens when you have a new technology, a new product in the market. When you had desktop computers originally, personal computers, they cost thousands of dollars. When big-screen TVs first came on the market, they cost an arm and a leg. When you first started to get these BlackBerrys, with which we all live, they were quite expensive.

You're not going to steal that, are you? It didn't go off. We're not really supposed to have these, but we all sneak them in, as long as we have them on quiet. But I digress.

All these products, when they're first introduced, are quite expensive. As we get more experience with the technology, we gain efficiencies. Solar and wind power, but particularly solar, are no different. When we first introduced it to Ontario, it was a new thing.

We said we need to have Ontario manufacturers manufacturing equipment for wind power and solar power. We don't want to import it from Asia or Europe. We

want to build it right here. With the start-up costs and the learning curve, there was a requirement for the market to start at a higher price, but now that we do have local manufacturers who are experienced, local installers who are experienced, as we get more experience with the technology—like any other new technology—we lower the price.

That's exactly what we have done, Madam Speaker, with the green energy prices. In fact, some of the solar energy prices have been lowered twice now. With those greater efficiencies of Ontario manufacturers coming to the market, we've been able to do that because so much more of the production and the expertise is now locally available right here in Ontario and, I'm pleased to say, right in Guelph, in my own riding.

We also announced in the 2012 budget that Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One will be benchmarked against national and international peers. One of the things that has been a complaint is that those two entities, which were the big pieces of the old Ontario Hydro, have costs per unit of generation and costs per unit of transmission which seemed to be out of line somewhat with other provinces or other states, in some cases. We want to make sure they are performing at the same level as their counterparts in other jurisdictions.

We have also set up the Ontario Distribution Sector Panel, which will look at what are formally known as local distribution companies, but what you would just think of as your local hydro company. In my case, it would be Guelph Hydro, but depending on where you live, it will be someone different.

That panel will be consulting with the electricity sector and looking at how the local distribution companies can achieve long- and short-term financial savings—in some cases, that may mean consolidation; in others, it won't—and how they can gain some operational efficiencies. That panel will be reporting back to the Minister of Energy within a year.

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I think it's important to think about where we've come from and where we are now. As we've mentioned, the Conservative government broke up the old Ontario Hydro and created this alphabet soup of agencies, and we haven't even mentioned all of them. There are some other bits and pieces out there that are trying to manage the stranded debt that was left and which we are all still trying to manage down.

One of the really, really significant things that happened during the Conservative reign was, because they broke Ontario Hydro up and thought they could sell it all, they were not prepared to put money into fixing things so that our transmission system, our provincial trunk transmission system, became very fragile. When nuclear generators were in need of repair, they just sort of parked them, waiting for some private sector person to come along and do the repairs. Oddly enough, what we found during the Harris era and the Eves era was that the demand for hydro, for electricity, continued to go up, but the capacity to produce electricity actually decreased, so

we had a bigger and bigger gap here in Ontario between the capacity to produce and the consumption.

What happened out of that was two things. First of all, we became more and more reliant on coal. Coal became one of our biggest producers of electricity. Of course, that meant a lot of smog, a lot of air pollution. The other thing that happened was that we became more and more reliant on importing energy rather than exporting it, so that Ontario became a big net importer of electricity, and that gave us the brownouts. It complicated the blackout.

In Guelph, when we had the big blackout that summer, we were out longer than just about any other place in Ontario. So when my constituents think about Tory energy policy, what they think about is a four-day blackout in the middle of a heat wave—not a brownout, a blackout, in the middle of a heat wave. That's what my constituents think about, and that's maybe why my constituents have been so—

Interjection.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Well, they certainly didn't like the idea of diesel generators on the street corners.

That's why my constituents have been so excited to be able to have rooftop solar generation, because they understand the fragile nature that the Conservatives left us with.

That's why we fixed the nuclear generation. That's why we are bringing on big hydroelectric projects. Just think of that tunnel that Big Becky is digging in Niagara Falls, that has been completed now. They're in the process of installing the generators so we can get more power out of Niagara Falls. We have another big project that will be done in the James Bay basin. We've been closing down the coal and replacing it with other forms of energy, and that includes green energy.

This bill will help us save money so we can have good, clean energy in Ontario that consumers find affordable. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Very good, Speaker. Thank you very much.

It's a pleasure to comment on the address by the member from Guelph. It is clear that she has not only drunk the Liberal Kool-Aid; she is intoxicated on it. It is just unbelievable how she just buys the entire package of messaging coming out of the Premier's corner office, and the Minister of Energy across the way, and how they are able to revise history, with no concern for the accuracy of what they're saying.

Let's make one thing clear about the blackout of August 17, 2003. There was much investigation done on the happenings of that very, very difficult event here in Ontario's history that cost the province close to \$1 billion at the end of the day. It was traced absolutely, clearly and definitively to a switching station in Ohio that malfunctioned. It caused a cascading knockout of switch after switch after switch up the line, knocking out the entire northeastern states and most of Ontario. Madam Speaker,

this is the kind of irresponsible politicking that goes on in this government when they've got themselves caught in a mess because of their irresponsible energy policy. They try to go back to an incident in 2003 when categorically, when the investigation was completed, it made it crystal clear that there were no issues in the Ontario electrical system that contributed to or caused that blackout.

There were changes made since then to ensure that that could not be repeated by changing the way—there are now checks and balances and stops in place so that this cannot happen. But when members across the way try to make politics out of one of the great disasters in history, on August 17, 2003, and play politics with it, it just shows how bad this government is. It's time to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to comment on a couple of things that the member from Guelph said. She spoke about the feed-in tariff. I have to say, I supported the feed-in tariff. We support small and medium-sized operators to get into the transmission system that we have in this province. We thought that was good. But the rates that you gave out were so incredibly high that you left yourself open to criticism and abuse. In Manitoba, the highest rate that was given as a feed-in tariff was five cents. So when you realize that the Liberal government gave up to 85 or 86 cents, the disparity between these two jurisdictions ought to be alarming to you, but it didn't occur to you that that was a problem. In my view, you should have thought of that in the beginning, and you didn't. To a lot of operators, you gave a whole lot of money. That's why they jumped into the market: because it was a good way to make a few dollars. While it was a good thing to do because the more of these small independent operators we have producing green energy—while that is good, we lost a whole lot of money in the process. Yes, you've got to pay in the beginning, but boy, did we pay a huge price.

I've got to tell you: What this government is not doing, neither your government nor the previous government, is to talk about conservation. Your commitment ought to be on conserving energy, not producing more energy. Your commitment to building more nuclear power is wrong. We should be focused on conservation. That ought to be the policy of any government of the day, because producing more power means we will pay more, and conserving means we would pay less. That should be the focus.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did appreciate the comments from the minister of Guelph—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The minister of Guelph?

Mr. Jeff Leal: The member from Guelph.

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Well, she does such a great job representing Guelph.

Let me shed a little light on what the history is in chapter 2 of August 17, 2003. After the free trade agree-

ment in 1988—prior to 1988, Canada's electricity system functioned on an east-west grid. After the free trade agreement in 1988, it went to a north-south grid, so it was totally integrated. When a switching system went down in Ohio, because of the orientation of the north-south grid, everything went down in the province of Ontario.

1010

That's exactly what happened. That was reviewed by a number of experts, including the CEO of Peterborough Utility Services, Bob Lake, who was a former vice-president of Ontario Hydro. Let me tell you, Bob Lake has somewhat of an insight into how the electricity system operated in North America through the IESO. So if there were any problems in the States, it was going to directly impact in the province of Ontario. Madam Speaker, those are the facts.

Since 2003 we have gone forward to put a number of failsafe technologies into the system to make sure that, if a small switch failed in Ohio—I've got to tell you, it probably wasn't a General Electric product manufactured in Peterborough, that switching system in Ohio, because it would have been much more reliable if it was a made-in-Peterborough, made-in-Ontario product.

There are briefings available that could give you the orientation about how the electricity system operates in North America. Indeed, the fellow at Maple, Ontario, who sits by the monitor, the IESO, can look at all generation aspects of electricity in North America to pinpoint. Those are the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I was very raised to the challenge from the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, where he was categorically explaining for the member from Guelph.

The member from Peterborough adds another dimension. There has never been an east-west grid in Canada—ever.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, there isn't. In fact, the east grid was always integrated because Quebec was selling all their power to New York long before free trade. It was formally integrated, but there has always been the north-east grid. Ontario's problem in the overall system is that it has very limited—about 3,000 megawatts—interconnect capacity. Why? It's hydroelectricity in Quebec, and it's hydroelectricity in Manitoba. Both are five times cheaper than ours. They don't want to—we should be buying their power.

What you say from Peterborough is absolutely wrong. It's another statement that they don't understand the system.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Look, Jeff, I will send you a report. You send me a report—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments through the Chair.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Guelph is putting information on the table, as is the member from Peterborough, that is not correct. Ontario was always the leader in electricity generation.

If you put some context around it, after the NDP, we started the refurbishment of the Pickering plant. That Pickering nuclear plant was down. That was another part down. You guys had promised to eliminate the coal plant, which you never did. You still haven't closed a coal plant; Elizabeth Witmer did. The whole point is, every time you talk about this file, the file that is completely messed up, you try to blame it on someone else. What the conservation commissioner said in his report—remember the conservation culture? You have done nothing on conservation.

Please explain your lack of a plan and the lack of execution of a plan, and explain why the taxpayers of Ontario are paying more and getting less from the McGuinty government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Guelph has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Trinity-Spadina, Peterborough and Durham.

I'd like to talk a little bit about this blackout. In fact, I didn't say that the blackout was caused in Ontario. I totally accept that it was caused by a switching device in Ohio which took down the whole of northeast America. What I talked about was the fact that it took four days to get Guelph back up—

Mr. John Yakabuski: We had nuclear plants. They don't start instantly, Liz. You've got to cool them down, and you've got to start them back up.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I know that. I'm a physicist's daughter. For heaven's sake, don't try to teach me that.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

The member from Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Not everywhere in Ontario took four days to come back up. That's the problem: Coming back up effectively, efficiently and quickly had to do with the fact that Ontario did not have enough generating capacity to meet its own supply, and we had to wait for others to get back online. It had to do with the transmission grid, a trunk transmission grid, which was fragile. It was the recovery that was caused by your neglect.

Secondly, with respect to the member from Durham's comments, 90% of coal use has been—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: —will be eliminated by 2014. That will be all coal shut down.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time for this session has ended. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to introduce members of A Cappella Showcase. This ladies' chorus will be representing Ontario and Canada at the World Choir Games this July in Cincinnati, Ohio. Please join me in welcoming them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If they break out in song, I'm not going to consider that heckling.

The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I invite the entire assembly to join me in welcoming members of the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. I have Nick Gurevich, Patricia Howell, Robert Stephens, Niki Kerimova, Jaisa Sulit, Dino Le Donne, Andrew Murray, John Karapita, Linda Langston and Brian Patterson. All of them are not here yet, but they'll be here soon.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce people from Sudbury who came all the way down to listen to introduction of bills this afternoon. Their names are Neil and Tabatha Haskett. They brought their three children, Clarisse, Natalia and Aiden. I also want to mention the grandmother, who is a good friend of mine, Desneiges Labonté. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

In the east members' gallery we have, from St. Joseph's College School, interning at Queen's Park, Theodora Kyriakakos. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thank you, Speaker. I would just like to introduce a former intern who was with me when I was in natural resources and now has joined me in the Ministry of Labour: Caleb Groen, my intern for the summer.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Premier, for the 65th straight month, Ontario's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average. In May alone, while Ontario lost 31,000 full-time jobs, the rest of the country added 32,000 full-time jobs. Only Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have yet to recover the private sector jobs lost during the last recession. Premier, can you explain why Ontario continues to lag behind the rest of the country?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I refer the official opposition to a report that came out this morning from Royal Bank. Let me read what Royal Bank has to say: "Ontario's economic growth rate will close much of the gap with the national average this year. We expect real GDP growth in Ontario to accelerate to 2.5%...."

I've got some more quotes—but to the opposition: Yesterday they talked about Ontario's challenges, Mr. Speaker. GDP is up. Employment is up. Unemployment is down. Retail sales are improving. Housing starts are up. Consumer prices are growing less in the country. Ontario is the best place in Canada. We're going to lead Canada again. We're going to lead it under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal party. Stop denigrating our province and start celebrating our success.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. As I am—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now that I have a moment, with all members in their seats properly, if they're going to make any comments, I will move right into identifying individual members during question period.

Supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, with respect, the facts tell a different story. Let's look at reality here: 600 jobs in Timmins have left for Quebec; 190 jobs from St. Thomas have moved to Ohio; another 600 jobs in Chatham have moved to Indiana. Ontario has lost almost 300,000 manufacturing jobs since 2003. Clearly, manufacturers are leaving Ontario for friendlier business climates, and one of the reasons that they are is because of your unaffordable energy policies.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Your energy experiments have driven up hydro rates and driven good jobs out of Ontario in droves. Premier, when will you stop experimenting with—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Peterborough.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: —the livelihoods of Ontarians?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Here's what the Royal Bank says about manufacturing and auto manufacturing this morning: "New motor vehicle production ... for all intents and purposes, entirely in Ontario ... stepped up significantly since the recession lows and, following a strong push since late last year, has now ... returned to pre-recession levels. In the first four months of 2012, auto production averaged a little more than 2.5 million units," which is up over the period of 10 years ago.

This government stood behind the auto sector, behind General Motors and Chrysler when they were in trouble. But guess where the member is having her fundraiser—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Peterborough.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —later this month? She's having it at Downtown Porsche—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —in Toronto. Imagine that. We ought to be supporting Canadian manufacturers. You're out singing a song about manufacturing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —you're slowing down the southwest Ontario economic development fund—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would offer a general warning: Do not test my resolve.

Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again to the Minister of Finance: I would suggest you tell all of that to the 500,000-plus people in Ontario who still don't have jobs.

Since 2003, Ontario has had the worst private sector growth outside of Atlantic Canada, sitting at a pitiful 4%. Meanwhile, the public sector has grown by a whopping 22%.

Premier, when will you understand that you can't spend your way out of this jobs crisis? When will you realize you can't grow our economy by growing the public sector? It simply doesn't work that way. When will you commit yourself to scrapping your energy experiments and make good policy decisions instead of good political decisions, which seems to be the case these days? When will you take a fair and balanced and sensible approach, get your spending under control, build your province and make Ontario again the best place in the world to live, work and raise a family?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, let me refer the member opposite—they're just presenting factual errors. Here's what the Royal Bank said this morning. There's declining public sector employment in Ontario since last year as a result of very significant federal cuts as well as what this government has done. In fact, the growth in employment has been in the private sector.

I would ask the official opposition to stand up for Ontario. Recognize that it's not what we're doing or what they're doing; it's what businesses are doing across this province. It's what working men and women across this province are doing. It's what our schools are doing. It's implementing a policy that will make Ontario number one now that the global recession is over, now that we've absorbed the dollar going from 62 cents to \$1. We're going to have a bright future. We've got the right policies to achieve it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. Ornge front-line staff have been watching the minister read inflated pilot and paramedic numbers from her Ornge news release.

Here's what Ornge helicopter pilot Bruce Wade from Thunder Bay told the minister in his email to her on June 7 about that Ornge press release that she has been reading

from: "Ornge claims to the press and others the base is staffed 24 hours per day. This statement, while technically correct, is less than honest.

"The actual facts remain: Medics are routinely, chronically and, without regard to proper medevac capability, removed or just not available for the trauma helicopter in Thunder Bay.... We are fully grounded without medics."

"Less than honest": That's how the front lines are describing this Ornge press release. Speaker, when will the minister realize that it's her responsibility to defend the people of Ontario, not Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to ask the member opposite: When is he going to take his responsibility as a member of this Legislature seriously and actually be part of the solution when it comes to improving oversight at Ornge? I think it's important that we look at yet the latest in a series of almost, partly, a little bit true, but not completely true, information that the member—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is getting desperately close to doing what I think she's trying to do, which means you should not be doing that. If you catch my drift, I think you'll stop.

1040

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yesterday the member opposite raised an issue. I looked into that issue, and what I found was that the allegations were not actually correct. So let me share the facts with the House. The use of a directive is one of last resort. The opposition is incorrect to allege that the use of a directive was—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The ministry has been working very closely with Ornge to ensure they comply with the new performance agreement. Since the new leadership has been installed, we've seen tremendous progress in the information we get.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, here's why Mr. Wade and his fellow pilots and paramedics are so frustrated with this minister and her government. The fact is that her response now is, in fact, disrespectful of Mr. Wade and his front-line employees and staff.

Here's what the latest downtime report for the Thunder Bay base for just the past 11 days shows: nine incidents totalling 44 hours where there were no paramedics at the base; two incidents totalling 21 hours where there were no pilots. These are statistics that represent lives at risk. When will the minister recognize that the numbers that count are not the numbers of the patients who were transferred successfully? That's the expectation.

It's the number of calls that we can't respond to that represent lives at risk. When will the minister assume her responsibility and become part of the solution rather than defend the indefensible?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I do understand that the member opposite is doing everything he can to dismiss the progress at Ornge. I think that's very unfortunate.

The fact is, because of the new performance agreement, we are now collecting information that we did not have access to before, exactly the kind of information that the member opposite is suggesting that we do collect. We do have a new performance agreement in place. It does mean we have more information. It means we can act on that information.

If the member opposite and his party would quit blocking Bill 50, we actually would be able to make the progress that we need to. Bill 50 would give the minister the authority to issue a directive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Let's get one thing straight, Speaker. If the government had wanted to pass Bill 50, they would have included it in to the programming motion that was tabled here. It was not. This is nothing more than rhetoric.

I'm going to send across to the minister both the downtime report as well as the email from Mr. Wade, because she obviously doesn't understand it and certainly hasn't read it.

I'm going to make a proposal to the minister right now. Rather than have front-line staff resorting to sending us brown envelopes, why don't we reserve one special day of hearings for all of those front-line staff who want to come forward? Let's provide them with a written guarantee of immunity from—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Peterborough, second time.

Mr. Frank Klees: —against reprisal so that they can all come forward and tell us what's going on at Ornge, tell us what's going on at the Ministry of Health. Will the minister, will the Premier, agree to that proposal?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, Mr. Klees himself today acknowledges that the facts in the press release are accurate, so let me repeat those facts in the press release. Ten more paramedics are working at Ornge now than a year ago. As far as airplane pilots, by mid-July we'll be at 98% of a full complement of airplane pilots. We have 69 helicopter pilots; we've recently hired five more, bringing the total to 74 in July. At that time it will be at 75%.

This is good news. This is movement in the right direction. I know it's not good news for the member opposite, but it sure is good news for the people of Ontario.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Last week, StatsCan reported that Ontario lost 19,000 jobs last month. Once again, Ontario is lagging the national economy. Nearly 15% of young people in this province are unemployed. The Premier's old solution was to insist that his unfair HST and corporate tax giveaways

would create jobs. Now, nobody believes that anymore, so is the Premier ready to consider new ideas to create and protect jobs in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Of course we're ready to consider new ideas. We always do, and the Premier is always open to new ideas. That's why he's setting up the Jobs and Prosperity Council: to bring some of the brightest minds in Ontario together around a table, looking to our future, to work with this government, to continue to tackle some of the challenges that exist, not only here in Ontario but in economies right around the world—challenges like skill shortages, challenges like productivity enhancements and improvements and productivity gaps that have existed here in Canada and in many jurisdictions around the world for a long time.

We're going to continue to work very closely with our business community, with our labour community and with Ontarians to build on the good work we've done to date in building a very strong economy, the good work we've done to date in putting the fundamentals in place to build that strong economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government says their jobs council is going to come up with their next batch of ideas, but it looks like a recipe for more of the same old ideas. The Premier promised "solid representation" from business, labour, academics and government representatives on the Jobs and Prosperity Council, but the bankers and CEOs outnumber labour 10 to 1. According to a report today, the chair, Gord Nixon, took home \$26 million in options over the past couple of years. Now, that's great for him, but it leaves everyday people wondering if he's going to understand at all the challenges that they're facing.

Does the Premier think that's a balanced group of people, capable of understanding the urgent need for a job creation program that actually puts people first?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's kind of ironic. The PCs think there's too much labour representation on the council, and the NDP think there's too little. I think, Mr. Speaker, that's an indication that we probably have it just about right.

There are a lot of talented people in this province, and the Premier and I have talked about this. We could have probably put together 10 councils representing hundreds of Ontarians who are qualified to give us this advice, but we didn't want to set up a congress. We needed to set up a council that can work together, of the right size—and I think this is about the right size—bringing together some of the best minds in this province.

I think if you look at the individuals on this council—who, incidentally, are doing this as a public service—these are people with great responsibilities. Their time is very valuable. They're donating their time so that they can help us build a stronger economy. Rather than denigrating the individuals on that council, I think the NDP should be joining us in praising them for stepping up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I don't know what planet the minister is from, but 10 to 1 doesn't sound like balance to me and probably doesn't sound like balance to a lot of Ontarians. And do you know what? I've met with some of these people before. They're nice people, and I do not doubt their sincerity, but everyday people who are looking for work were hoping for some different views, to bring some new ideas, and instead we see a lot of the same old CEOs with the same old solutions.

We've put forward positive ideas to protect and create jobs, like a jobs creation tax credit, for example. Is the government ready to start listening, or are we just going to see more of the same failure?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, this government doesn't just listen; we act. That's why we've put in place in Ontario the fundamentals critical to building a strong economy: investing in our people, investing in the education of our young people: 81% of our young people now graduate to post-secondary education, the best in the OECD, one of the best in the world. We've built one of the best workforces. We've invested in infrastructure, critical to building a strong economy, in record amounts. We've lowered the tax rates here for businesses in this province, helping to ensure that we're one of the best locations for foreign direct investment in all of North America. And Mr. Speaker, because of the vision of our Premier, who has put his passion behind investing in innovation, we've doubled the investments in research; we've made Ontario a virtual research and innovation hotbed.

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Those initiatives are paying off in building a strong economy in this province.

We're not satisfied. We want to do more, and the jobs and prosperity task force will help us get there.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. In 2010, with much fanfare, the government rejigged Ontario's auto insurance rules. As a result, insurance companies are making even bigger profits because they're saving \$350 in medical and rehabilitation benefits for every single car that they insure. Can the Premier tell us why drivers pay more and are getting less in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'll be pleased to take the first question and refer the subsequent ones to my colleague the Minister of Finance.

What I can say is, it's important to take a look at our record when it comes to automobile insurance. The fact of the matter is that we have kept rates below the increase in inflation, or the cost of living. We have the most comprehensive coverage in the country. In the last period where we look at—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —in fact, overall, come down.

So we are working very hard to continue to strike the right balance between the cost of premiums and the coverage that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Durham, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —have to be able to count on. I think to this point in time, we've been striking the right balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Gee, Speaker, today seems to be morning of the Liberals deciding that they don't know what balance is all about. That's what we see over here. They do not know what balance is all about.

You know what? The government's reforms make life very profitable for some, but they leave everyday drivers with the worst—worst—of both worlds. Drivers pay auto insurance with the reasonable expectation that they're going to be covered in case they have an accident. Now we learn that those who are injured the most severely will see their benefits axed, and yet Ontario drivers are still paying the highest rates in Canada. That is not balanced, Speaker. That is not a balanced system. How can this government call that a fair system?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, let's just put some facts into the debate. We've released a report today to get public comment about catastrophic injury, based on a panel of experts that have made recommendations to the government. None of those is being proposed to be implemented today, so I'd recommend that you withdraw the rhetoric associated with that, number one.

Number two: Rates in Ontario have gone up slower than virtually everywhere else in the country since we took office. They went down the last quarter on regulated rate increases.

We've improved benefits. Our benefits are comparable to every province in the country.

What the leader of the third party and her party want to do is raise premiums in northern Ontario, they want to raise them in eastern Ontario, they want to raise them in southwestern Ontario. They want to make good drivers subsidize bad drivers. They want to make good drivers subsidize people who get convicted of things like drunk driving, Mr. Speaker. That's why a number of groups—and we'll share their quotes in a moment—reject your concept.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what the finance minister is not telling anybody is that Ontario premiums were 3.5% higher in 2011 than they were in 2010. What this government wants to do is just protect the status quo that isn't working for drivers and has us paying the highest rates across the country.

As the government knows, we get letters over here. John in Brampton writes this: "In 2003 I paid about \$700

for car insurance. Today almost \$2,000. I am 65 and retired, living on around \$25,000 per year. Due to the punishing cost of insurance...I no longer can afford to live in a city and area that I have resided in my whole life."

April writes: "Not only is the auto insurance industry in Ontario discriminatory, it is a scam that is making a few people very, very rich."

Is the government ready to admit that they have failed drivers, that their status quo isn't working and it's time for a plan that gets costs under control, not just time for good profits for the companies that sell insurance?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, when those rates went up 3.5%, we took action with a package of reforms that are now bringing rates down again.

I'd like to remind the leader of the opposition, who doesn't seem to think about public safety—I don't have an anonymous quote from a first-name unidentified individual; I have a quote from a group that wants to put its name on the public record, and a very reputable group. Here's what Mothers Against Drunk Driving says about the NDP's insurance policy: "MADD Canada would strongly advocate that" it "be rejected. In our view," it "sends all the wrong messages, punishes responsible drivers, rewards dangerous drivers, and will increase the risk to Ontario road users." In the short, you are threatening public safety with an ill-thought-out, ill-conceived plan that will raise premiums for the very people you purport to represent.

This government has a plan that's lowering rates. It's the right plan, and the people of Ontario understand that.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Health. In an attempt to defend her lack of appropriate action and her failure to restore confidence in Ontario's air ambulance service, the minister has recently taken to reciting a litany of statistics related to Ornge. The minister has recounted the number of patients Ornge transfers, the number of vehicles Ornge owns and the number of staff that she's recently hired. Since the minister is seemingly up to date on her numbers, I would like to ask her this question: Can she inform the House of the total number of minutes Ornge helicopters at the London base have been unavailable to respond to emergencies so far this calendar year?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I actually do have some good numbers for today because I know the people of this House do want to know how Ornge is doing. Yesterday at Ornge, there were 37 patients transferred; 71 hours flown; three rotor scene patients transported; 30 inter-facility transports; four by land; and seven little babies, pediatric patients, got to the care they needed.

We are addressing the challenges at Ornge. We're hiring more paramedics—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —we're hiring more pilots—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order. Second time.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're moving in the right direction, and I think the people of Ontario expect to see that progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: We've been advised that the base in London responds to emergencies throughout southwestern Ontario, including Wellington county, Halton region and Waterloo region. The minister seems to be unaware of the serious situation that is occurring throughout Ontario, and she has been rather selective in the data she chooses to share with this House.

The PC caucus has obtained yet more leaked information from insiders that reveal that from January 1 of this year to yesterday, June 11, helicopters at the Ornge base in London have been unable to respond to emergencies for 10,224 minutes. That's 170 hours, or the equivalent of a full week of downtime—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): He's asking the question, member from Renfrew.

Mr. Ted Arnott: —and we're not even halfway through the year.

Will she now admit that the air ambulance service the people in southwestern Ontario rely upon in a life-or-death crisis often cannot even be deployed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's no secret that there have been staffing issues at Ornge. It's also no secret that we are addressing those challenges. We have very good news—very good news. We've got 38 pilots—seven more coming on board by mid-July—that will take us to 98%. When it comes to helicopter pilots, we've got 69—recently hired five more—bringing it to 74 by July; we'll be at 95%—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew has been eyeballing the eagle.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: So, Speaker, this is good news.

I really would like to ask the member opposite if he will volunteer to be the whip in his caucus to get support for Bill 50 so we can get that passed and get moved on with the changes that need to be made at Ornge.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. A constituent of mine from Chappleau, Debby Pellow, must travel to Timmins for dialysis three times a week. This forces her to drive 12 hours a week and stay in Timmins overnight when roads are bad. This is exhausting, stressful and very difficult for her to accomplish. But to make matters worse, Ms. Pellow is waiting as long as three months to be reimbursed through the northern

health travel grant, and she is going deep into debt waiting.

Does the Premier remember his promise to simplify this program with online applications with a three-week limit on reimbursement?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can say is that we have really speeded up the process for the northern Ontario travel grant. I will more than happily look into this particular case, Speaker.

We think it's important that people get to the care they need, regardless of how far they are from the care that they need, and that's why we have quite a robust northern Ontario travel grant. We are working hard to streamline it. We've made some terrific headway, but I will certainly look into this particular constituent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question again is to the Premier. Speaker, the sad fact is, last summer the Premier made his third promise to fix the broken northern health travel grant with a three-week service guarantee. When an election is around the corner, the Premier is ready to acknowledge how broken this travel grant system is and gives his word that it will be fixed. But once re-elected, it is constituents like mine, Mrs. Pellow, who are left to deal with a program that treats their access to health care services as an afterthought.

Speaker, why should people like Mrs. Pellow continue with hardship and trust this Premier to deliver on health care promises when year after year those promises are broken?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that in 2007 we improved the eligibility criteria. We've made the program more accessible. We've raised the accommodation allowances, making the needed travel more affordable. We have improved the processes pretty dramatically, but I will go back and check to make sure that we are actually meeting our target. I can tell you that as of February 2011, 98% of applicants were processed within six weeks, Speaker. I will undertake to ensure that we are still meeting a very high standard.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. Minister, on Friday, Statistics Canada released its monthly job numbers. While year to date Ontario is up in overall net jobs, I share the concern of our residents in Mississauga who see swings in employment month to month: up full-time jobs and down part-time in one month, and up part-time and down full-time jobs in the next month.

Families are nervous about the instability and the unpredictability of our economic future and also our potential for job growth here in Ontario. Minister, how is Ontario tackling this issue, and what steps has the province taken to combat this concern among Ontarians?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member very much for that question. Really, those are the questions that have

been consuming this government for the last eight or nine years as we've made important investments in the fundamentals of building of a strong economy.

But, Mr. Speaker, we want to go even further. We want to look at some of the key challenges that our economy and others are going to face over the coming years. We want to take a look at our business support programs, for instance, to ensure we're getting the best possible value for those programs, so we've set up the Jobs and Prosperity Council, which will provide us with some advice on that. We also want to look, Mr. Speaker, at ways to improve productivity and competitiveness so we can continue to compete in that fiercely competitive global economy. The council will give us advice on that. We want to also look at the skills shortage that we see happening in Ontario and globally. We'll look for their advice on that.

We'll also look at the job creator tax credit that the NDP is proposing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, the new Jobs and Prosperity Council will provide the Premier and this House with sound advice on job creation. The minister has spoken about the qualifications of Gord Nixon, who is set to be the chair of the council. As head of the Royal Bank of Canada, Mr. Nixon has an impressive resumé.

It's nice that the council has a strong chair, but my question is about the balance of those who are going to serve on the Jobs and Prosperity Council. Would the minister give the House an overview of the backgrounds of the remainder of the council?

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member heckles the question, and it's actually almost identical to a question that came earlier from the NDP. It's a good question because balance is really important, Mr. Speaker. We're going to be counting on these individuals to provide us with the best possible advice.

As I said, we would have liked to have had sectors right across the board represented, but you've got to be practical; you've got to be realistic.

But we do have a lot of sectors in our economy represented. For instance, there's Jim Stanford. He represents the CAW. He is a very well-thought-of economist. He'll be providing us with some assistance. The retail sector is represented by Bonnie Brooks of the Hudson's Bay Co. Northern Ontario is represented by a gentleman by the name of Darryl Lake, the food processing industry by Maple Leaf Foods president Michael McCain, and the auto parts industry by Linda Hasenfratz. There are entrepreneurs, forestry representatives and many others. I'll wrap up by saying we're looking forward to their advice.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Minister of Health. The minister has made numerous claims to have fixed the problem at Ornge. She likes to call on

numbers as proof of the progress that she has made, so I'd like to share some relevant numbers with the minister—numbers that have come directly from Ornge; numbers leaked by concerned front-line staff.

On February 13, 2012, the primary helicopter at the Toronto Island base was out of service for 12 hours, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. The very next day, the same helicopter was out of service for another 12 hours. On April 22, the primary helicopter was out of service for six hours and 45 minutes. May 26, 2012: again out of service for another 12 hours.

I ask the minister: Given these numbers, will she admit that the people of Toronto and the GTA do not have access to a safe and reliable air ambulance service?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do have a couple of more numbers that I would love to share with the member opposite. One of those numbers is 36; 36 is the number of votes that I think we should get from the party opposite to vote for a bill with another number, and that number is 50. If the members opposite are so concerned and want to be part of the solution when it comes to Ornge, I would really support the notion that 36 members vote for Bill 50.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Minister, everyone has five minutes of truth a day. Hopefully, you'll have them in here.

The minister owes the people of Burlington and the GTA a credible explanation for her failure to address the serious operational gaps at Ornge. From January 1, 2012, to yesterday, the Ornge base on Toronto Island has struggled with an out-of-service helicopter for 26,420 minutes—440 hours in the last six months when an air ambulance was totally unavailable in the GTA. Given this information, will the minister admit that she has failed the residents of the GTA, that she has put patients at risk and that she will hold a special day of hearings with immunity for front-line staff at Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaking of front-line staff at Ornge, I think it's really important that we take this opportunity to say thank you to the extraordinary men and women who work at Ornge who do everything they possibly can every day to provide the best possible care to the people who are trusting them to get them to where they need to go.

I am enormously proud of the people at Ornge. These have been difficult times because they've been under attack from the party opposite. But I can tell you, I am very, very pleased to see, despite the attempts of the members opposite, that more people are actually joining the Ornge team. We've got 10 more paramedics working at Ornge, we've got seven more airplane pilots and we've got five more helicopter pilots joining the team at Ornge. This is great news, and I am delighted to see the changes at Ornge.

DOCTORS' SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Yet

again, we are hearing that talks with the Ontario Medical Association have broken down. The minister and her government seem to be kind of happy to play the blaming game, yet a very simple step would go a long way to bring the two sides together: the use of a conciliator.

Will the minister finally agree to use a conciliator so that progress can finally be made in the OMA negotiations?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are so blessed in this province to have the doctors we have. We have extraordinary doctors. I'm enormously proud of the work they do every day in our hospitals, in our communities, in our long-term-care homes. We are blessed to have superb physicians.

1110

We are attempting to have negotiations on fees. That is the work of government. I stand by our decision, which is to really focus on community care and home care, services that can take people out of hospital and back home where they want to be. We're asking physicians to be part of the transformation in health care, and I'm confident and hopeful that we'll get back to the table, and we'll get there soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, the question I asked was a simple one, but the minister seems so determined not to budge an inch that she's losing sight of her responsibility, the responsibility to put people and patient care first. Refusing to talk to Ontario physicians puts us in a lose-lose-lose: the government loses, the physicians lose and every patient in Ontario also loses.

Why won't the minister agree to this simple step and ask for a conciliator so that both parties can negotiate a fair agreement?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There are conversations that are going on between government and the OMA. Those conversations, I hope, will continue and, indeed, accelerate.

What I can tell you, Speaker, is that we have 3,400 more doctors working in this province than when we took office. I can tell you we've increased compensation to physicians by 85% over the past eight years. In 2003, we inherited a very serious problem from the party opposite. Ontario doctors were leaving Ontario. They were moving to other jurisdictions. We did have a problem: Ontario doctors were underpaid. That is no longer the problem.

In our health care system, we have to set priorities. Our clear priority is getting people out of hospitals and back home where they want to be, where they'll receive the best possible care.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. I understand that Corporate Knights, a Canadian company focused on green industries, recently released their third biannual Green Provincial Report Card. The report card evaluated provinces and territories on their progress in seven categories: air and climate,

water, nature, transportation, waste, energy and buildings, and innovation.

Interjections.

Mr. Phil McNeely: They didn't check us out to see if we're supporting your pro-pesticide ban across the hall here.

Speaker, through you, I'm wondering if the minister could please speak to the details of this recent report and, specifically, how Ontario fared in comparison to the rest of Canada.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member obviously stole the next Tory question.

I'm pleased to inform the House that Corporate Knights has found Ontario to be Canada's greenest province in the latest Green Provincial Report Card. Ontario earned the highest grade in the 2012 report with an A minus. The province was recognized for our success in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the phasing out of coal-fired electricity generation, the single-largest greenhouse gas reduction initiative in Canada.

Earlier this year, Ontario got top marks in Canada from Ecojustice when that uncompromising environmental group looked at how well provinces protect drinking water.

Last week, our government introduced the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act that, if passed, would ensure a cleaner Great Lakes for the future.

It's an honour for Ontario to be recognized for our success in building a greener province, and I know that all members of the Legislature will applaud that particular recognition by Corporate Knights.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Minister, thank you for the detailed reply. My next question is more focused on our emissions and air quality as we move forward into the future of energy supply.

A section of the Green Provincial Report Card discussed energy and emissions, which are typically an area of discussion on an international level. Many international jurisdictions are looking for cleaner sources of power like wind and solar to help bring down their impact on the environment. My constituents in particular have been wondering what Ontario has been doing to ensure that the health of our families are a primary focus of our energy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

I've tried to be patient, and that one was a shot at an individual, so the member is warned, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Hon. James J. Bradley: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member from Ottawa-Orléans, a great champion of green, is very correct. We've made it a determined policy to get out of coal. We're making a lot of progress. We've shut down 10 of the 19 coal units. Of course, burning coal creates dirty air. It's now less than 3% of our power supply; under the PCs, it was 25% of the power supply and increasing.

Not only is this the largest climate improvement initiative in North America—greenhouse gas reduction initiative—it saves billions of dollars in health care costs; it saves thousands of illnesses.

Let's be clear: We're getting out of coal; the two parties opposite are going to put it on standby. We all know that the only reason you put something on standby is so that you can secretly bring it back. So we call on the parties opposite: Shut it down, take it out of service, do what we're doing, get out of coal by 2014.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and it's about your newly formed boondoggle, the Ontario College of Trades.

Minister, the first part of my question is about the newest McGuinty tax grab. The new trades tax for membership fees is something that Ontario trades workers do not need or even know is occurring. As I visit organizations across the province, I am finding that the vast majority of the construction industry has no idea what your College of Trades even is. Those who do know are deeply concerned with the direction it is headed, primarily because of the biased governance and now the trades tax.

Construction associations are estimating that your new trades tax will collect a minimum of \$84 million in the first year from the trades workers.

Minister, can you tell this House and the hard-working tradespeople in Ontario what they are getting from the College of Trades for their 84 million trades tax dollars?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a delight. I'm glad the member opposite has switched to tea from coffee.

The trades council is a very critical part of building a successful apprenticeship strategy, and let's just start with what the results of that have been. We have 120,000 students now in apprenticeships and trades. That's twice as many as we had only eight years ago.

I want to pay tribute to all of those families and parents who are understanding that carpenters and pipefitters and folks are part of this extraordinary construction boom that's going on out there, where 140 towers are going up in my city alone, a level of economic success and demand for trades that was never seen when the party opposite—and we've been governing through difficult times, Mr. Speaker.

We are upskilling our workforce. The college oversees ratios, it oversees standards, it oversees safety, and it brings the same level of professionalism that our teachers, lawyers and other professions have had, and most people in the field are excited about it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I don't think you understood the question. I asked you what the \$84 million was going to get the trades workers.

Minister, the secrecy around your College of Trades is actually deafening. Their website claims, "The college is

committed to an open and accountable consultation process." That's what they actually say, and yet we now learn the details from the submissions for consultations on your trades tax, the \$84 million in membership fees, will not be made until possibly later this summer. From this, we conclude that there is a massive opposition to these trade tax fees.

Clearly, there is a lack of accountability and transparency. I know that the Ontario Working Families Coalition won't agree with us, but it is time for you to show leadership and to stand up with Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs and scrap not only your trades tax but also scrap this real mistake that is the College of Trades. Minister, will you scrap it?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take a guess that my friend is more familiar with Mr. Johnson than I am, since he served in caucus—I know he wasn't here as long as Mr. Bradley. I've always viewed Mr. Johnson as an ethical, transparent, accountable person, and I think the leadership that he is providing right now to the College of Trades is critically important.

This government, unlike the party opposite, has governed in a very non-partisan way. We have invited members on almost every committee—from the horse issues to this—we have invited former cabinet ministers from governments opposite and brought forward a good balance between labour and business, because we're trying to govern for all Ontarians, not some subset.

We realize that sometimes we have to be Ontarians before we're partisans. Certainly, the success we've had now with 30,000 folks is partly because of people like Mr. Johnson. This government has reached out—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

1120

BEDBUG INFESTATION

Mr. Jonah Schein: My question is to the Minister of Health. Last year, Toronto Public Health's bedbug unit inspected almost 5,000 apartment units and helped hundreds of households get rid of bedbugs. But the province cut funding for this program in March, and now there's only one bedbug inspector for our entire city.

Last week, council committed \$250,000 to partially reinstate its bedbug program. Council is asking the Ministry of Health to provide matching funding so that the bedbug prevention efforts can be fully reinstated. Why is the province refusing?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I want to take a moment to acknowledge the very fine work of the member from Eglinton–Lawrence on this issue. He raised this issue, and he spurred the action that came out of that.

The member opposite knows that the funding we supplied was one-time funding. We were abundantly clear that it was one-time funding. The city of Toronto received \$1.2 million. We're also prepared to flow an additional \$255,000 to Toronto for three new public health nurses.

We launched a public education campaign to help Ontarians fight bedbugs. The website, bedbugsinfo.ca, is one of the legacy pieces of that initial investment and it is helping people every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Back to the minister: You speak as if the bedbug problem has been solved, and it simply has not. This is a provincial issue. The minister wrote to the city in April and you said, minister, that you “recognize the resurgence of bedbug infestations in Toronto is an important issue.” But so far, Speaker, the minister has refused to offer a single penny of support. Worse, the McGuinty government has cancelled the community start-up and maintenance program, which helped families on social assistance pay for emergency repairs related to bedbug infestations.

A small amount of funding for inspection and support can help families avoid significant health issues and even homelessness. Why is the government so stubbornly refusing to partner with the city of Toronto in tackling the current bedbug infestation?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said, we made it very, very clear that our investment of \$5 million last year to fight bedbugs was one-time funding. All of our partners knew it was one-time funding. The city of Toronto is enjoying a magnificent surplus; we are not. We urge Toronto Public Health to do their job to help their residents fight bedbugs. We’ve done our part. We have increased base funding to Toronto Public Health by 90%; we’ve almost doubled funding to Toronto Public Health since we were elected in 2003.

ICEWINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Kim Craiton: My question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, Canada enjoys a fine international reputation for its icewine production. This is a sector which exports over \$12 million annually, over 80% of which comes from Ontario. I am extremely pleased to say that a large portion of that is from my riding, from Niagara-on-the-Lake. Over 675,000 litres of icewine were produced in Ontario in 2011. In fact, about 30% of Ontario’s 103 wineries produce icewine.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can the minister outline the importance of the icewine sector’s high standards that need to continue in order to succeed?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yes, I can, Mr. Speaker. I want to first thank the member from Niagara Falls for his question.

Ontario growers should be tremendously pleased with the praise that their icewine receives. The distinctiveness, quality and authenticity of Ontario icewine have been central to its success as a signature Canadian export. This reputation is our most valued asset, developed principally by Ontario grape and wine industry stakeholders, and any downgrading of the standard upon which this reputation has been built would constitute a considerable blow to the industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kim Craiton: My question is again to the Minister of Agriculture. I was contacted by the Grape Growers of Ontario recently about concerns they had with the identification of our locally produced icewine.

As I’m sure you’re aware, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency currently has a proposal to develop a national standard for icewine production. Minister, establishing a standard that requires icewine to be made only from grapes naturally frozen on the vine is critical to maintaining Canada’s reputation as a world leader in icewine.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: Minister, could you inform this House of any communications you may have had with the federal government with regard to their ongoing discussions on icewine standards?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I’m delighted to respond to the member, and I’m pleased to indicate that I have written to my federal colleague Minister Ritz with respect to adopting a national standard.

We believe in Ontario that adopting this standard would be consistent with the standard we already have in place here in the province. So I’ve urged Minister Ritz to adopt strong national standards of production in order to maintain our hard-won reputation. I’ll be having the next of several periodic consultations by phone this afternoon with Minister Ritz, and I’ll be driving that point home then.

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Health. The residents of North Dufferin have been struggling to find primary care since a number of physicians and nurse practitioners resigned from the family health team last year.

Minister, I wrote you in March, asking that the audit be released so the public knows what has been happening at the Shelburne family health team. Will you commit today, in the name of transparency, to release that audit?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do want to thank the member opposite for bringing this issue to my attention some time ago. As she does know, there is an audit, and I will undertake to release that audit. In fact, I believe that I can do that today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Minister. I do appreciate that. It’s unfortunate that we were reading excerpts of that audit on the weekend in the newspaper, but I appreciate the offer to release the audit.

The reality is that the Shelburne health centre, the county of Dufferin, the Headwaters Health Care Centre all want to work together to ensure that my residents in North Dufferin and Shelburne get the services they need. I’m sure, and I’m hopeful, that as a result of the audits, we will finally get some action on primary care in Shelburne, because, as you know, we’ve struggled for many, many years to get primary physicians and nurse practitioners to come and stay in our community.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think on this issue, the member opposite and I are completely aligned. I think there are 4,400 patients being served by the Mel Lloyd family health team. We know that it is a challenge getting those health professionals in rural areas. That's why we treasure them so much.

I look forward to working with the member opposite to make sure the people in her community do get access to the primary care they need—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Yesterday the Minister of Labour seemed misinformed or didn't understand her own ministry and their guidelines. She said that servers in Ontario could call her ministry for help if they are being treated unfairly by their bosses.

It seemed at that time that the minister did not know that her Employment Standards Act does not cover employees' tips. And she did not understand that in Ontario, it is not illegal for employers to help themselves to servers' tips.

Now that the minister understands that the Employment Standards Act does not prevent bosses from taking their workers' tip money, will she work with us to prepare an act that will actually help employees?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Maintaining a fair and balanced relationship between employers and employees in all industries, including hospitality, is one that our government feels is important. Our government is always willing to listen to ideas on how we can improve the lives of workers in our province.

This issue is a little more complicated than the member would lead us to believe, and this one-sentence amendment wouldn't actually achieve what I think he wants it to.

1130

For example, many establishments' tip-outs are collected from servers and are shared with dishwashers, hosts and bussers, who help the restaurant function. This strategy is implemented by restaurants as a means to ensure that the support staff take home more than the minimum wage. The language used in the bill suggests that the owners may be forbidden from collecting tip-outs and distributing them to hard-working members of the support staff.

Clearly, the member has good intentions, but the bill has some unintended consequences. I know that debate will help that conversation, and I look forward to working with the member to ensure fairness in the industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Perhaps the minister is not aware of how widespread this is. One Toronto restaurant even gave their manager the tip-outs in lieu of Christmas bonuses. That's how widespread this is.

The jury is out. The public and members of this House agree that bosses should not be allowed to help them-

selves to tip money meant for employees. Thousands of employees are legally being ripped off by their employers. It is wrong. It is egregious.

Instead of the minister telling servers to find another job if they don't like tipping out to their bosses, will she act quickly to protect Ontario's servers and support Bill 107 or, if she wants, bring in her own bill?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to reiterate that waiters and waitresses and bartenders work hard to earn a decent living and they deserve to be treated fairly by their employers. So I want to thank the member for his advocacy. Our government, again, is always willing to listen to new ideas on how we can improve the lives of workers in the province.

I know that tip-outs are a contentious issue within the hospitality industry. What is considered a tip-out in one business may be considered tip-sharing in another. I actually did my own poll last night and talked to my son, who has previously worked as a server, and he said that his tip-outs were often taken by the employer and redistributed amongst support staff.

What I would say is that I know that I've heard from a few servers. I would encourage the member to share the information he has. I want to work with him. I think this is a very important issue. I want to debate it, and I look forward to working with him to ensure fairness in this sector.

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Minister, your ministry plays a valued role in promoting attractions while drawing visitors to Ontario, supporting the cultural and heritage sectors and fostering participation in sport and recreation activities across the province. Through these initiatives, the government must continue to build a creative and innovative knowledge-based economy and vibrant and livable communities.

In particular, Minister, Ontario's aboriginal communities play a key role in the province's and in Canada's history. We are home to a rich diversity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, and we must continue to invest in them.

Speaker, can the minister indicate what this government is providing to support aboriginal communities in the areas of tourism, culture and sport?

Hon. Michael Chan: I thank the honourable member for asking that question and for standing up for Ontario's aboriginal community. Speaker, the member will be reassured to hear that since 2003, we have invested over \$44 million for cultural initiatives, over \$5 million for tourism supports and over \$20 million for sport, recreation, and community-based programs benefitting aboriginal populations in Ontario.

Our investment includes \$11 million in First Nations libraries; over \$900,000 through Celebrate Ontario for 21 aboriginal events since 2007; over \$3.5 million through the Community Aboriginal Recreational Activator pro-

gram; and nearly half a million dollars for the development and implementation of a provincial aboriginal sport body. We will continue to support our aboriginal community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1134 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my privilege and pleasure to announce that the Holy Family school from Hanover in the beautiful riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound was here earlier today. They were in the gallery. I had my photo taken with them on the stairs. They thoroughly enjoyed their day in our building.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome to our guests.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's my honour to also introduce the students of École Assomption in Earlington, from my hometown of Earlington. They're here today and I had my picture taken as well. They also really enjoyed this part of southern Ontario.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Merci, monsieur le Président. J'ai le plaisir maintenant de vous présenter l'équipe Qaadri. Speaker, I have the pleasure and honour and privilege of presenting to you the Qaadri team from where it all happens: the senior Dr. Qaadri, her husband—who happens as well to be my father—Mr. Qaadri, my wife, Huma Qaadri, and the next generation of parliamentarians, Dr. Shafiq Qaadri Jr., and Dr. Shamsa Qaadri. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome to our guests.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a family that has driven all the way from Sudbury to come here to Queen's Park today because they are very happy about the introduction of a bill that my colleague is going to do this afternoon. Their names are Neil Haskett, Tabatha Haskett, and they have their three children with them. This is Clarisse, Natalia, as well as Aiden. And I also want to mention their grandmother—her mother—Desneiges Labonté.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? Do I see the member from York West with an introduction or—

Mr. Mario Sergio: I was going to introduce you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You were going to introduce me. Okay. I need all the help I can get.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GARY CROWELL

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Halton Police Chief Gary Crowell retired on Saturday, June 2, after a 42-year policing career.

Interjection: Wow!

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I know.

A Burlington resident, Chief Crowell served 13 years with the Halton Regional Police Service, the last six as its chief of police. In that capacity, Chief Crowell developed programs such as the domestic violence unit, the Internet child exploitation unit and the street crime unit.

He has earned praise from faith and multicultural leaders across Halton for his community outreach. Chief Crowell is also known for his strong support for women in policing and was the first recipient of the Ontario Women in Law Enforcement president's award.

Chief Crowell has witnessed a period of transformative growth in Halton region. He has managed a force of 600 police officers, an annual budget in excess of \$116 million and, above all, defended the security of Halton's half million residents. He was instrumental in Halton being ranked the safest place to live in the GTA and the safest regional municipality in Canada four years in a row by Maclean's magazine.

It was my pleasure to attend Chief Crowell's final official function, the citizenship court at Burlington city hall, on Friday, June 1. I'd like to wish Chief Crowell a happy, restful and well-earned retirement.

GLENN COCHRANE

Mr. Michael Prue: It's with a great deal of sadness I rise today to talk about Glenn Cochrane. Glenn Cochrane, as many people know, worked for CFTO News for many years, and you would have remembered his television—he was always on at the end to show a fluff and funny piece, a man of tremendous wit.

He started working in his journalistic career at the Hamilton Spectator and, in fact, was born in Hamilton. He went on to CFTO News, where he was a mainstay of that for 25 years, until he retired nearly 20 years ago.

But people who live in our neighbourhood know him best as a Beacher, a person who lived in the Beach and celebrated the Beach and worked for the people who lived in the Beach for many years, along with his wife, Jean.

He was a print journalist, but most recently at the Beach Metro News he wrote a funny column that was always a pleasure to read each and every week. He was also a celebrated author. He wrote a book called Glenn Cochrane's Ontario, for which he was honoured with a heritage award in 2006, and most recently, in 2009, a celebrated book—a small, little book, 128 pages—called The Beach, tracing the whole history of our community.

In 2002, he was named citizen of the year, and we celebrated with him at that time.

Our condolences go out to his wife, Jean, to his two daughters, Judith and Martha, and to his grandson Christopher. We will always remember Jean and Glenn as a couple—but especially Glenn for his wit and wisdom, a personable man who was well loved by everyone he met on the street.

COURCELETTE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It gives me great pleasure to rise today and congratulate Courcelette Public School on celebrating its 100th anniversary. Courcelette has a long and storied history in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. The school first opened its doors in 1911, when it was formerly known as Chester Avenue. At the time, it was comprised of only one room with no running water or indoor toilets. In 1917, the school was renamed Courcelette in honour of the great World War I battle of the same name.

On May 26 of this year, I had the honour of celebrating Courcelette's anniversary with hundreds of friends, teachers, students, parents and alumni of Courcelette. Greetings were brought by dignitaries, and performances were made by students. I especially enjoyed Ms. Pennington's grade 1 and 2 class performing "When Children Join Hands"—too bad that doesn't happen here.

On behalf of the Premier of Ontario, I had the honour of presenting a scroll to the principal of Courcelette, Ms. Phany Captsis, which recognized the school's tremendous milestone.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the 100th anniversary committee, school council, staff, students, alumni and parents of Courcelette Public School for their hard work and dedication in preparing for this very special celebration.

VAIBHAVI "SONU" SOLANKI

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise in the House today to recognize a remarkable youth leader from Hanover in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound who was recently awarded the Youth in Motion Top 20 Under 20 national award for her remarkable scientific work, academic excellence and exceptional service to her local and global communities.

At age 16, Vaibhavi "Sonu" Solanki was the first-ever high school student and one of only two people in Canada to be accepted into the Doctors Without Borders overseas medical program. Her credentials were so superior that an exception was made to the admission process. Normally, you have to be 18 years old and in university.

In preparing for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, Sonu quickly and easily mastered the Hindi language in just one month and then flew out to work as an assistant in the surgery room at the Muni Seva Ashram hospital in Goraj, India. While there, Sonu participated in 25 surgeries and helped with administering anaesthetics and following cancer patients from diagnosis to treatment. As part of her outreach work in India, Sonu also helped to vaccinate about 30 people for polio using \$2,000 of her own savings.

It should come as no surprise that this gifted and talented young woman also holds a spot in the country's top 25% of math whiz kids as well as three gold medals at the regional science fair and bronze at the Canada-wide science fair.

She is among a select few students chosen from across Canada to participate in the CEMC national mathematics and computer science program at the University of Waterloo, Queen's University's $E=MC^2$ enrichment program and the Deep River Science Academy, where she worked on world-class, cutting-edge research.

When she's not busy studying for grade 12 exams, Sonu mentors younger students in science and math and assists with the junior science fair. Last year, the town of Hanover named her its junior citizen of the year.

I'd like the House to join me in congratulating Sonu and wishing her the best in her next endeavour, which will include a pursuit of a medical degree at the University of Toronto, to be followed by a return to rural Ontario to practise medicine—Hanover, we hope.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the House about 500 members of CUPE Local 966, Ontario Works unit, a unit made up of mostly women, who are on strike and have been on strike for the past six weeks. They're on strike for respect and equality with other workers in the region.

It's particularly shameful that this unit is comprised of 90% women and they provide services to, again, 90% women, and they are not being given a fair share. They provide services such as child care service, outreach to vulnerable residents, financial relief for those in need and employment assistance.

Essentially, what's going on here, Mr. Speaker, is that these workers are not given a fair deal. Other regions are being provided with year-by-year increases and increases to their benefits, whereas these workers are being given a net loss of over \$450 over the next three years. It's simply unacceptable.

In fact, last week, the public works unit has also gone on strike, as well as the transhelp unit of Local 966.

We must stand in solidarity with workers who are providing essential services to Peel, to the city, to the surrounding community, and who are not being given a fair deal. They deserve to be treated with fairness and equality.

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ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Bill Mauro: While summer is not officially here, the warm weather is and people in Thunder Bay-Atikokan have been heading to the lakes and their camps for weeks now. I want to acknowledge the great work being done by the local roads boards in our communities. These volunteers and their ratepayers provide their time and money to support a large system of roadways in northern Ontario.

Speaker, the work they do does not merely benefit the ratepayers and the campers, but it benefits everyone who uses those roads: hikers, people going fishing and blueberry picking, and the list goes on. That's why I was

very pleased to announce last year that our government would double the funding to local roads boards from \$12.5 million to \$25 million, a funding ratio of two government dollars for every dollar raised from the rate-payers. This funding increase reversed a decision made in the early 1990s by a previous government.

I thank my roads boards chairs, trustees and ratepayers for the work that they do to benefit so many, for partnering with us, and I'm grateful that our government maintained this investment during these very, very difficult economic times.

It might have seemed fiscally convenient to reverse the decision, but we did not. Our continued commitment to this initiative for local roads boards in northern Ontario is another example of our government's major investments in our region, and our commitment to the people of northern Ontario.

AL PETTIT

Ms. Sylvia Jones: We've all met some amazing volunteers who do so much in our communities. I'd like to tell you about one special man we just lost. Al Pettit lost his eight-year battle against amyotrophic lateral sclerosis on May 31.

As a retired Mississauga fire captain with 33 years' experience, Al was well respected and admired in the community and by his peers. In 2003, when he was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, he began a hard-fought battle to maintain his independence and was a tireless worker in his effort to increase awareness and support for the ALS community. Al helped to raise an amazing amount of money through fundraisers and by participating in the annual ALS walk.

He also acted as a mentor and supporter for many on an ALS Internet forum that now boasts over 10,000 members. Al loved life, and offered insight through his own struggles and successes as hope to others who are afflicted with the disease.

This year, the Orangeville ALS walk continued in Al's memory, as he passed away only two days before the walk. Seventy per cent of the money raised by the walk helps to fund equipment needed by those with ALS. The remaining 30% goes towards research. As a final gift, Al donated his spinal column and part of his brain to assist in researching treatment for the disease.

Al lived his life with dignity and distinction. He had an enormous compassion for others and has left a lasting legacy, both as a retired firefighter and as a strong advocate for the ALS community. His death is being mourned by his loving family and friends and those who were inspired by his life.

MONIKA WYRZYKOWSKA

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Today I rise in the House to thank my OLIP intern, Monika Wyrzykowska, and to commend the Ontario Legislature internship program for creating a non-partisan program that offers great

opportunities for young people to expand their skill set and gain new experiences. Since 1975, the OLIP program has been giving qualified candidates practical work experience in the Legislature. I have only had great experiences, as Monika is my second OLIP intern.

Monika came to our office in February, and from her first day she proved herself a capable, enthusiastic and highly skilled member of our team. She assisted in many areas of the research and development of my private member's bill, Bill 93, and she sat in on meetings with me, wrote communications materials and, during a busy time here at Queen's Park, was a true asset.

During these last few months she contributed so much to my office. And during this time Monika also found the time to go to Europe and get married, proving this remarkable young woman to be the very definition of a multi-tasker.

I am very grateful to Monika for all her hard work and wish her all the best as she enters the Ontario internship program for the next two years within the Ministry of Education.

CAREER SERVICES

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to rise today to pay tribute to Career Services, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. For the past four decades, Career Services has done much more than just make a difference. They've actually changed the lives of hundreds, probably thousands, of people with intellectual disabilities in Leeds–Grenville.

By providing meaningful work, Career Services has helped them become active and engaged members of our community. We all know a job is crucial to self-esteem. It's essential to being a participant, not a spectator, in society.

I commend Career Services for its unwavering commitment to ensure that a disability isn't a barrier to experiencing the tremendous rewards of independence, opportunity and personal satisfaction that come with being employed.

Under the calm, steady hand of executive director Alec Thomas and his dedicated staff, Career Services has successfully navigated the stormy seas of the economic downturn. This has positioned the agency well to continue providing for its clients. As a former chair of the Career Services board of directors, I count the experience as one of the most rewarding of any public service work I've done, so I want to acknowledge with thanks the outgoing board chair, Dave Paul, who is stepping down after 10 years at the helm. I'm so pleased that Dave will remain on the board to help incoming chair Candy Burkitt lead the journey into a future of continued success.

The clients of Career Services are better off because of the agency's work over the last 40 years, but I also believe that our community as a whole has benefited even more by becoming a more inclusive place to call home.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated June 12, 2012, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 33, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to gender identity and gender expression / Projet de loi 33, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui concerne l'identité et l'expression sexuelles, the title of which is amended to read An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to gender identity and gender expression / Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui concerne l'identité sexuelle ou l'expression de l'identité sexuelle.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill therefore is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne le taux légal d'augmentation des loyers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 31, 2012, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNMENT
BILLS ACT, 2012LOI DE 2012 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE
DES PROJETS DE LOI ÉMANANT
DU GOUVERNEMENT

Mr. Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act respecting government bills / Projet de loi 109, Loi concernant les projets de loi émanant du gouvernement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Harris: Today I'm pleased to introduce the Transparency in Government Bills Act. This piece of legislation, if passed, would require the government to table a comprehensive report with each government bill detailing its financial, economic, health and environmental implications.

When new laws will affect the livelihood of individuals and the profitability of their businesses, the government should at least inform them about the potential impacts. That's why I'm proposing that each government bill include, among other things, a detailed summary of the financial costs the bill will have on government, municipalities, individuals and businesses. My bill then requires that this information be posted on the Legislative Assembly's website to give Ontarians the tools necessary to assess the costs and benefits of new legislation. Thank you.

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I ask the House for its attention—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes. Sorry, sir.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —and now I've received it.

Introduction of bills?

OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT ACT
(CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES), 2012LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'OMBUDSMAN
(SOCIÉTÉS D'AIDE À L'ENFANCE)

Miss Taylor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to amend the Ombudsman Act with respect to children's aid societies / Projet de loi 110, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'ombudsman en ce qui a trait aux sociétés d'aide à l'enfance.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have a feeling I have been restricting the heckling in question period too

much, because it's carrying over into introduction of bills.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Holy mackerel.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Miss Monique Taylor: The bill amends the Ombudsman Act to allow the Ombudsman to investigate any decision or recommendation made, or any act done or omitted, in the course of the administration of a children's aid society.

There are several families here today, and families watching from across the province, to hear the reading of this bill. The NDP has brought forward this bill several times, and I'm really hopeful that this time, as it's being read as a separate bill dealing directly with the children's aid societies, we will have members from all across the House supporting this bill.

TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE TAMOUL

Mr. Coteau moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to proclaim the month of January Tamil Heritage Month / Projet de loi 111, Loi proclamant le mois de janvier Mois du patrimoine tamoul.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Coteau: If passed, this bill would recognize the valued contributions that Tamil Canadians have made in Ontario's social, economic and cultural fabric. Tamil Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the inspirational role that Tamils have played and continue to play in communities across this great province.

OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT ACT (SCHOOL BOARDS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'OMBUDSMAN (CONSEILS SCOLAIRES)

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Ombudsman Act to allow the Ombudsman to investigate the actions of school boards / Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'ombudsman pour conférer à l'ombudsman le pouvoir d'enquêteur sur les actions accomplies par les conseils scolaires.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The bill amends the Ombudsman Act to allow the Ombudsman to investigate any decision or recommendation made, or any act done or omitted, in the course of the administration of a school board. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Introduction of bills?

I do want to make one comment before we move to the next business. I remind all members that it is now customary, and it's been reminded, that we read from the explanatory note on the introduction of the bill to avoid any confusion or concerns about statements versus comments. Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY

Hon. Charles Sousa: June 12 is Philippine Independence Day. On this day 114 years ago, Filipinos gained their independence and the Philippine nation was born. We were pleased to acknowledge this important day by raising the Philippines flag at Queen's Park earlier today. By raising the flag, we recognize the tremendous contributions that Filipino Canadians make in Ontario. We also join the Filipino community to celebrate their freedom, both in the Philippines and in Canada.

We're very fortunate to have a large and vibrant Filipino community in Ontario. Like many newcomers to Canada, Filipinos have had to overcome the challenges of moving to a new land, and they have thrived from their hard work, community involvement and strong family ties.

Filipino Canadians' desire to succeed has brought neighbourhoods back to life and strengthened our communities. The Filipino community, along with many other cultural groups, are helping Ontario succeed.

To commemorate independence day, the Filipino community is holding a number of different events and activities to honour and enjoy Filipino culture and celebrate freedom in both the Philippines and Ontario.

Filipino Canadians are proud of their heritage and culture, and they're proud to call Ontario their home. And we're proud of Filipino Canadians. They're a vital part of our diversity, which makes Ontario such a wonderful, strong and dynamic place to live.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Filipino Canadians in Ontario.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Your enthusiasm will get the gallery guests in trouble.

Thank you.

TOURISM

Hon. Michael Chan: On behalf of the McGuinty government, I'm pleased to take this opportunity to speak about some excellent news for Ontario's tourism industry.

Ontario's tourism sector is and will continue to be an important part of this province's overall economy. Recent numbers attest to this. Mr. Speaker, latest Statistics Canada indicators for 2011 suggest that our province saw an increase in visits to 104 million to Ontario, with a strong increase in visitors from emerging markets like India, China and Brazil. And more Ontarians than ever before discovered what a great place Ontario is to explore.

What does that mean for Ontario's economy? It means that visitor spending increased by 3.6%, to \$18.3 billion. It means an increase in tourism receipts to over \$23 billion. In turn, provincial taxes generated by tourism receipts increased by 2.5%, to \$4 billion. All that means jobs for Ontarians.

Those preliminary 2011 figures also show that total employment generated by tourism receipts in Ontario increased to over 330,000 jobs; 2011 was a good year for Ontario tourism.

Ontario's international presence continues to grow and attract visitors from around the globe. Ontario is a premier travel destination, attracting a number of major national and international conventions and events, helping to further strengthen the economy and create jobs.

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In 2011, Ontario hosted major events like Ottawa Bluesfest, the Juno Awards, the Sudbury Francophone Games and the International Indian Film Academy Awards—the first time this event was ever held in North America.

Just look at some of the major events we have going on as we start the summer: the Toronto International Track and Field Games; the Stratford Shakespeare Festival; the Microsoft Worldwide Partner Conference, with 15,000 delegates from 150 countries; the Sarnia Rogers Bayfest; the Toronto International Film Festival; the Ottawa Jazz Festival; Luminato, which is taking place as I speak; and, in the fall, the centennial 2012 Grey Cup.

Major national and international events like these promote Ontario's brand and increase awareness of our province as a premier travel destination.

I would like to make a special note of a unique event: the commemorations of the bicentennial of the War of 1812. This unique three-year event marks a defining moment in our nation's history. It also offers Ontarians a unique opportunity to showcase our province and our heritage—a strong, diverse and vibrant society and a leading tourism destination.

These are just a few of the provincial tourism and culture agencies and attractions that draw millions of visitors every year.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that as a tourism destination, Ontario is second to none. From natural wonders to unique, world-class festivals and events, Ontario is truly a land of diverse and engaging regions that invite exploration.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

TOURISM

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my distinct pleasure, on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, to respond to the Minister of Tourism and Culture on summer tourism attractions in Ontario.

I'm very privileged to represent the riding of Durham, which is a wonderful riding. It's made up of three distinct communities: Uxbridge, Scugog and Clarington. It stretches from the Oak Ridges moraine in the greenbelt in the north to Lake Ontario in the south. It's the largest riding in the GTA. Its focus is on agriculture, autos, energy, the university—UOIT—as well as the college. We thrive on outdoor activities like sailing, boating, camping, hiking—one of the largest trail networks, all the way from Pickering right through to Northumberland, in our riding. We have summer theatre, Art in the Park with the visual arts centre, and the Kent Farndale Gallery.

I want to thank Durham Region Tourism, specifically Kerri King, who is their manager of tourism—and there's a very interesting website; I'd encourage people to look and encourage them to attend—Kristyn Chambers, who is the tourism coordinator; as well as Kathy Weiss, who's the director of activities.

To mention a few, we have Archibald's winery, and we have Ocala winery, right in my riding.

The Canadian Tire Motorsport raceway just had a great event. I think there were 20,000 or 30,000 people attending.

We also have a really important event occurring in August at the Uxbridge park, Elgin Park, and it's a very well attended, very well supported visual arts presentation, and that's the weekend of August 18 and 19.

Lake Scugog is renowned for the amount of fishing and fishing tournaments that are held on Lake Scugog, all during the summer—and all different varieties of fish, as well.

The local activities that occur almost every weekend in Palmer Park or in Elgin Park are the kinds of things where you meet and greet with people from across the GTA. It's a welcoming community. Really, when you look at it, there are activities for children. The Bowmanville Zoo: It's the largest private zoo, I believe, in Canada.

I would say that if I look at the trails in Durham, not just on the Oak Ridges moraine—Uxbridge is the trail capital of Canada.

So I'd encourage people to visit the riding of Durham, but also the region of Durham. It's full of fun and activities and has a wonderful website that you can

consult and find out what's going on every single weekend all summer long.

PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I'd like to take this moment to recognize Philippine Independence Day. On June 12, 1898, Filipino revolutionary forces proclaimed sovereignty and the independence of the Philippine islands from Spain.

On this national day, people of Filipino descent from around the world celebrate their rich history, language and culture.

Here in Ontario, over 200,000 Filipino Canadians will gather with family and friends to celebrate this historic occasion. From parades to flag raisings and the annual Independence Day potluck picnic at Earl Bales Park, hosted by the Philippine Independence Day Council, Toronto, this day truly represents the strength, vitality and solidarity of the Filipino community in Ontario.

Through hard work, responsibility and respect for family, Filipino Canadians not only embody Canadian values but help build a stronger and more prosperous Ontario. For all Ontarians, Philippine Independence Day provides an opportunity to learn about Filipino culture and traditions and to reflect on the tremendous contributions that this community has made to our great province.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, I would like to wish the Filipino community the best as you celebrate Philippine Independence Day.

PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Michael Prue: It is my privilege and honour to respond to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration on this, the national Independence Day of the Philippines. As has been said by other speakers, this is the 114th anniversary of Philippine independence, and all around the world where Filipinos live there are flag raisings, food, music, joy—Filipino traditions that seem to land in every single part of the earth.

Filipinos remember this day as a day of bravery of General Emilio Aguinaldo and his revolutionary forces that overthrew the colonial rulers, but they also remember that in spite of that, they still lived under another sovereignty until 1946, when the Treaty of Manila gave them full authority over their own affairs.

There are some 300,000 Filipinos living in Toronto, and many of those came to Canada during the years 1973 to 1993, when I worked in immigration—a time to meet an awful lot of them. They moved in and around, at first in the St. James Town area of downtown Toronto, and they became there a vibrant community. They spread out across the entire province. But what I remember best were those years of Caravan when the Filipino pavilion was in East York. East Yorkers, to this day, celebrate that great tradition.

TOURISM

Mr. Paul Miller: My response is to the Minister of Tourism. When I think of summer, I think of many activities that brought us in contact with such things as historical sites, water events and—my favourite—Stoney Creek Dairy cold ice cream on a hot summer day. As an adult, my thoughts turned to the many attractions that are available to explore, appreciate and share with others. Living so close to Niagara Falls, we were lucky to be able to visit that attraction easily. Also I enjoyed many family vacations on Lake Couchiching in Orillia.

But Ontario has so much more to offer each of us, and, of course, our tourists. From the Ontario-Manitoba border to the Ottawa River and Point Pelee, we have something for everyone. Unfortunately, although this government brays about our tourism industry, it turns a cold ear to the real concerns of the providers of information and welcoming our guests to Ontario. Closing the travel information centres in the north is a foolish action that tells these tourists that we don't care about their visit, their spending and then telling their friends and family about the great adventures they had in Ontario.

At the same time as they close the doors on these tourists at the border, they close the doors to Ontarians' access to crown lands, historically available for our local residents and tourists. The McGuinty Liberals seem to be good at partly closing everything and at closed doors.

Over the next three years, Ontarians will commemorate the War of 1812 to 1814. The success in that war is why we are Canadians today. Although there were many battles and successes in the war, the Battle of Stoney Creek on June 5, 1813, was the seminal victory that beat the Americans back across the Niagara River and kept the lands that form part of Ontario today.

I have approached this minister on several occasions for proper funding for the 200th anniversary in Stoney Creek, to no avail. But now, how does this governing group acknowledge such a significant and historical event in Ontario? By apportioning paltry amounts of tourism dollars to local events.

Rather than making announcements about Ontario's summer tourist attractions, this government should be supporting our local events, all of which attract large numbers of tourists while supporting our local industries. Reopen our northern travel information centres, reopen our crown lands to local use, and put real dollars—real dollars, Minister—into the many commemorations of the War of 1812, which you are not doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: Earlier today I spoke with the Minister of the Environment on this very issue.

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

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"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby" and their enjoyment; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles" on only very special occasions over four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved" that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

I'm pleased to support this on behalf of my constituents, sign it and give it to Andrew, one of the pages.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I have 840 signatures for auto insurance reform needed to protect consumers. It reads as follows:

"Whereas auto insurance rates are too high in the province of Ontario and continue to increase;

"Whereas families across the greater Toronto area (GTA) are facing unfair insurance premiums that have more to do with where they live than their accident history or driving ability; and

"Whereas insurance premiums across the GTA differ by as much as 150% for drivers with the same driving record;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly undertake auto insurance reforms that protect consumers, ensuring that premiums are based on a fair assessment of a driver's known ability and history, rather than unfairly targeting drivers on the basis of where they live."

I strongly agree with this petition, will affix my name and hand it to page Kyra.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition here from young people in the Waterloo region and Wellington areas, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

I agree with this, and I will affix my name and send it up to the table with Andrew.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment, to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

This is brought to me by Margaret Anthony, Victoria West District Women's Institute, and given to page Hannah.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north's economy; and

"Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

"Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the planned cancellation of the Northlander and the sale of the rest of the assets at Ontario Northland Transportation Commission be halted immediately."

I fully agree, add my signature and give it to page Gopi.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm delighted today to present a petition on behalf of Gladys Shea, who lives at 1182 Fleetwood Road in the wonderful community of Janetville, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bioartificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this, affix my signature to it and give it to page Angela.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

"Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

"Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and the organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

"Whereas Bill 23 passed first reading in the Ontario Legislature on December 6, 2011;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly vote in support of Sylvia Jones's Bill 23—the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act."

For obvious reasons, I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Kyra.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition coming from the people of Brampton and area, as well as the people of London and area, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's cardiologists provide accessible, efficient, and cost-effective diagnostic testing services that save, and improve, the lives of thousands of people each year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's unilateral, punitive changes to the OHIP fee schedule will result in

the elimination of these crucial services, thereby leading to a reduction in patient access to care, the lengthening of waiting lists for services, the eradication of high-quality health professional jobs, and an increase in preventable deaths; and

"Whereas the Ontario Association of Cardiologists has presented an alternative, namely, the implementation of new, rigorous standards, which would ensure that cardiac diagnostic tests are done on the right patients, at the right time, by appropriately trained people, in accredited facilities, thereby reducing the number of inappropriate tests and leading to significant financial savings for the government; and

"Whereas the proposal has the endorsement of the highly respected Cardiac Care Network of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Direct the Ontario government to repeal the OHIP fee schedule regulation changes filed on May 7, 2012, and instruct the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to work with the Ontario Association of Cardiologists to implement proposed cardiac diagnostic testing standards across the province."

I will give this petition to Daxime and send it to the Clerk.

CANADIAN BLOOD SERVICES

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario retains responsibility for the effectiveness of the blood supply system as an integral component of provincial/territorial health care delivery requirements; and

"Whereas Canadian Blood Services has failed to meet provincially mandated targets to increase Canadian content in blood products, including intravenous immunoglobulin (a critical tool in the fight against cancer); and

"Whereas Canadian Blood Services is in fact closing down Canadian production facilities—including the Thunder Bay plasma donor clinic—while increasing imports of American 'surplus' plasma; and

"Whereas the US blood system has not fully adopted the World Health Organization recommendations to reduce transfusion-transmissible infections, raising questions about the security of blood product imports;

"We, the undersigned, request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to use its role as a 'shareholder' in Canadian Blood Services to pursue the goal of increasing Canadian content in blood plasma products and reinstate such facilities as the Thunder Bay plasma donor clinic towards achieving that end."

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government is forcing Ontario municipalities to build industrial wind turbines without any local say or local approval; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government transferred decision-making power from elected municipal governments to unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats; and
1550

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus has committed to restore local decision-making powers and to building renewable energy projects only in places where they are welcomed, wanted and at prices Ontario families can afford;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government restore local decision-making powers for renewable energy projects and immediately stop forcing new industrial wind developments on municipalities that have not approved them and whose citizens do not want them in their community."

I agree with this petition, and I shall sign it and send it down with page Stavroula.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario," with Health Sciences North, "its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available" through Health Sciences North, "thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I couldn't agree more, Madam Speaker. I will affix my name to it and ask Tameem to bring it to the Clerk.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas St. John the Evangelist Catholic elementary school in Weston is overcrowded, with 480 students in a school designed for 260; and

"Whereas the students will be relocating 40 minutes away in September 2012 during the duration of the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has placed St. John the Evangelist third on the urgent capital priority list for 2012"—and actually, that's now first on that list;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Respectfully request full funding to replace St. John the Evangelist school during the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; therefore, the students are not relocated twice."

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and send it over with page Andrew.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has changed the availability of epidural injections for quality pain control for people with pain from whenever required by the physician prescribing it, to only being allowed to have 12 epidural injections per 12 months, amounting to one every four weeks to the date of the previous injection, regardless of the level of people's pain requiring the injection and without regard for the quality of the people's lives who are living with this pain;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To return the time frame for epidural injections for pain control being administered by the pain specialist physician to the previous allowance of being able to receive these injections when required by the attending physician."

I affix my signature to these names.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir de présenter une pétition qui a été signée par les gens de Sudbury et de Nickel Belt :

« Attendu que la mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive en français des services de qualité du gouvernement de l'Ontario et de surveiller l'application de la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que le commissaire » aux services en français « a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que contrairement au vérificateur général, à l'ombudsman, au commissaire à l'environnement et au commissaire à l'intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l'Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français;

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative « de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin

qu'il relève directement de l'Assemblée législative », comme il est recommandé dans son dernier rapport.

Je vous remercie, madame. J'y ajouterai ma signature et je demande à page Hannah de l'amener aux greffiers.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

I support this. I will add my name and give it to Colin.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time for petitions has ended.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (RENT INCREASE GUIDELINE), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION (TAUX LÉGAL D'AUGMENTATION DES LOYERS)

Ms. Wynne moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne le taux légal d'augmentation des loyers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just would like to note that I am going to split my time with the member for York West, who is also my capable parliamentary assistant and a man who understands housing from his long experience in elected office, both as a city councillor and as an MPP for York

West, where there are many, many constituents who live in rental accommodations. He'll be speaking when I'm finished.

I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on the third reading of Bill 19, which would amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, with regard to the annual rent increase guidelines. I just want to comment at the outset that when I was first campaigning to run in the election of 2003—so it was my first provincial campaign—one of the issues that was top of mind for many of my constituents was that of tenant protection and the affordability of rental accommodation in my riding of Don Valley West, but generally across the province.

When we came into office, we actually made a lot of changes to what was then called the Tenant Protection Act. We changed it because we didn't believe it actually did what the title of the act said, and we created the Residential Tenancies Act, which made a lot of changes that I believe were very balanced. One of them was to introduce a rent increase guideline that was tied to the CPI. I'm going to come back to that as I go through this presentation because, if passed, this proposed amendment that we'd like to make to the Residential Tenancies Act would keep rental housing costs affordable and stable for tenants in Ontario. It would allow landlords to maintain their property and to make sure that any necessary repairs and maintenance costs are covered. Beginning in 2013, the rent increase guideline would be more stable and predictable, if the bill was passed.

I want to acknowledge the important work that was done during the committee phase and the role of the opposition, specifically the role of the third party. I want to acknowledge the work of my critic, the member for Welland, and her help as we moved this legislation through, so thank you very much for that. What happened in committee was that a significant change was made to the proposed amendment. What that change was: to eliminate the floor in the future rent increase guideline. As a result, if this bill is passed in its current form, the guideline would continue to be based on the Ontario consumer price index, but the new guideline formula would ensure the rent increase guideline would be capped at 2.5%, but there would be no floor. That was the change that the third party introduced. It was a significant one, and we thank you for that.

Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker: I apologize—more than one million tenant households in Ontario were covered by the annual rent increase guideline, and that's both individuals and families. Families with children are 31% of tenant households in Ontario, and we know that stability at home is directly related to their health and well-being.

1600

Pour que les enfants puissent être forts et en santé, réussir à l'école et s'épanouir, ils ont besoin d'un foyer familial sécuritaire et sûr.

For children to be able to live strong and healthy lives, do well in school and to flourish, they need a secure and safe home with their families. This proposed amendment

would let Ontario families and singles who rent rest assured that their rent would not increase beyond 2.5%. With that, it just removes one more barrier to being able to focus on jobs, education and health during what have been and continue to be somewhat difficult economic times.

This government has the same focus and that's why we've proposed this amendment to help Ontario tenants, because we want people in Ontario to be able to focus on those core responsibilities of education and health and raising their families and making sure that they can take part in the community. So this is what we can do right now to help them find some stability in their tight monthly budgets.

The government continues to look for opportunities that will benefit residents of Ontario in favourable ways, and we believe that this proposed amendment is one of those ways. With the amendment, tenants would have the security of knowing that the monthly cost of their homes would be stabilized.

You know, the economy has been very uncertain. I noted that there have been some difficult economic times. I think one of the difficulties has been the degree to which there has been uncertainty. So when we tied the rent increase guideline to CPI, what we've discovered over the last few years, and certainly in the last year, is that it didn't necessarily reflect what was going on in people's lives. So we felt that putting this amendment in place would increase that stability. I don't think any of us can stress the importance of that enough, that kind of stability. Fluctuation in costs is something that is vital to family, as rent is stressful.

Nous savons tous que disposer d'un logement, c'est avoir accès à quelque chose de fiable, à un élément sur lequel on peut compter.

We all need to know that a place to call home is something that must be reliable and something that we can count on. Proper housing is bricks and mortar, it's the physical place that we live, but it's also much more than that. It's crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty. And we have made a commitment as a government—the first government in Ontario to do that—to have a poverty reduction strategy, to work consistently on reducing poverty. This amendment would fulfill an important goal of that poverty reduction strategy that we've put in place, and that is to work to keep housing costs affordable and stable.

This proposed new rent increase guideline, along with other government initiatives—one of those is our investment in affordable housing, which, to date, is more than \$2.5 billion. Right now, there's \$480 million in communities across the province, money that is provided by the provincial government, in partnership with the federal government, to provide new build for affordable housing and also to allow municipalities to have the flexibility to provide rent supplements and those kinds of supports that allow them to keep housing affordable. So we know that this rent increase guideline is along that continuum and supports that principle of keeping housing affordable.

We've heard that too many families are not able to keep up with inflation, that too many are worried about their rents increasing beyond their ability to pay and they don't know what to expect. The letters received by my ministry attest to the struggle that many tenants are facing, especially pensioners who live on a fixed income. That stability that I spoke of is particularly important to pensioners living on a fixed income. These are people who have worked hard and they've earned the right to live with dignity at a time in their lives when they are the most vulnerable. There are letters from those who cannot afford to pay the rent and from people whose income has not kept up with their annual rent increase. We believe that now is the time to act to provide tenants with some relief.

This proposed amendment, if passed, would also provide some stability and clear expectations for landlords. Safe, secure and properly maintained housing is essential for good health and well-being, and as I've said, it's what Ontario residents and their families deserve. This proposed amendment would help tenants prevent potential financial problems and protect families that are vulnerable. That link between health and housing is well documented, and the fact that it would give landlords some stability and some understanding of what they could expect means that they will be able to do the necessary planning.

In its final report, the social determinants of health commission, under the World Health Organization, indicated the strong link between health and housing. This was a report that was issued in 2008, and I quote from that report.

According to the commission, the health impacts arise from the physical quality and the affordability of housing. It goes on to say, "One of the biggest challenges facing cities is access to adequate shelter for all. Not only is the provision of shelter essential, but the quality of the shelter and the services associated with it, such as water and sanitation, are also vital contributors to health."

So housing, as a determinant of health, I think is well understood among housing providers but also among social service providers, among municipal administrators and among local politicians as well as provincial politicians.

I will just say, Madam Speaker, that the notion that this is an intergovernmental responsibility, I think, is an important one. I mentioned that the investment in affordable housing money that is in the system right now, that \$481 million, is money, as I said, that is in the system because the federal government and the provincial government have worked together. I believe that we need a national housing strategy. We need the investments in affordable housing to be consistent and incremental. Sometimes when we think about infrastructure, we don't always count housing as part of infrastructure. Infrastructure, meaning roads and bridges and institutions, is all critical, but housing is a piece of infrastructure that needs the same kind of incremental treatment that those others do.

Madam Speaker, we certainly know the cost of health care is rising. The contributing factors are varied, but providing adequate housing is linked to and is important to excellent health care.

In that same report from the World Health Organization that I quoted from earlier, it also makes the following important points, saying, "The cost of 'doing nothing' in the face of deep and persistent housing insecurity and homelessness—as measured by increased health, justice, education, and social services costs—far outweighs the cost of solutions."

Our proposed amendment to the act includes a requirement for a review of the annual rent increase guideline formula every four years. The reviewing of the guideline every four years will ensure that it reflects the changes to the economic environment.

We want to move quickly to implement these changes in time to affect the 2013 rent increase guideline. As I've said, Madam Speaker, our government is committed to continuing to work hard to make sure that safe, decent and reasonably priced housing is within every family's reach.

As I said, we developed a plan to do with affordable housing. We've developed a long-term affordable housing strategy. It's the first of its kind in Ontario, and it is a cornerstone piece of the poverty reduction strategy.

Notre gouvernement s'engage à aider les Ontariennes et les Ontariens à trouver un lieu de résidence sûr, salubre et abordable. Je demande instamment à chacune et à chacun d'entre vous d'appuyer ce projet de loi.

I hope that everyone in this House will support this legislation. Our government is committed to helping Ontario residents to have safe, secure, affordable housing, and I think that that's a goal we can all appreciate and accept and support.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm pleased to rise today in support of third reading of Bill 19. As the minister said, with the passage of this proposed amendment, tenants will have the security of knowing that the monthly cost of their homes would be stabilized. They could rest assured that their rent increase would be capped at 2.5%. People can get on with their daily living without the added stress of worrying about an amount that could affect their household budgets.

Our government has been working hard to find relief for the people of Ontario who rent and whose budgets are stretched—people who struggle to pay their bills every month, people who are fighting to keep their family sheltered in decent homes.

1610

This proposed amendment would also work towards reducing uncertainty and giving Ontario families a measure to help them meet the demands of their monthly budgets. Housing is a basic requirement of life. People want to count on having a home for their families, and this proposed amendment would provide something renters could count on.

Families need stability to be healthy and happy, and keeping rent increases stable for Ontario tenants is the goal of this proposed amendment.

Those families with children that rent know that children are affected by what goes on around them, even if they are too young to understand exactly what is happening. The trauma and disruption children experience when their families are forced to move might negatively affect their health, their social and emotional development, their attendance at school, their academic performance. All these factors are closely tied to having a stable home and thus having a sense of security.

Whether or not we have a roof over our head affects everything else in our lives, and this should come as no surprise. We should not downplay what effect this proposed amendment would have on families whose income is budgeted down to the last dollar every month.

Our government has consistently shown a strong commitment to protecting tenants across Ontario. This government proved that commitment with the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, which established strong rent regulations to keep rent affordable for tenants. It was Ontario's first piece of residential housing legislation to establish a fair, transparent and objective way to calculate annual rent increases. As part of this legislation, the annual rent increase guideline is based on a real cost indicator, namely, the Ontario consumer price index, or CPI. Using the CPI to calculate the annual rent increase guideline is the most transparent approach.

The act was written after extensive consultations that lasted two years with a large number of tenant and landlord groups. The government's goal was about striking a balance, and these consultations were carried out in order to find that balance. Part of that balance included the McGuinty government's support for and inclusion of several recommendations from the Federation of Rental Housing Providers of Ontario that are included in the act. As a result, the Residential Tenancies Act established a fairer, more responsive rental housing system that helps build stronger communities across this province.

The proposed amendment, if passed, would make things even more fair by keeping any annual rent increase capped at 2.5% for the next four years. Our government has afforded tenants across Ontario the lowest year-over-year increase of any government in recent memory. We believe this proposed amendment would continue holding the balance we were striving for when we first introduced the act.

To thousands of Ontario residents who rent, this in itself is a huge relief and one less thing to worry about on a daily basis. Wherever Ontario renters call home, they would know that the cost of living in their homes would not be able to increase so dramatically as to take away hard-earned income from their monthly budgets, income that can be spent on the other pressing needs of life: food, clothing, medicine, transportation and the other monthly expenses, many often unforeseen, that all of us face.

Ontario has the largest population in Canada and Ontario's major cities have some of the more expensive

housing markets in the country. But regardless of where in Ontario someone chooses to live, affordability of housing is a factor of economic well-being. Families or individuals who spend a large portion of their income on shelter may face housing insecurity. Shelter is the largest expenditure for most households, and its affordability can affect well-being.

The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, or ONPHA, reminds us that "Housing is the home of all issues. And the solution." Note where this quote came from. ONPHA's 2011 report titled *Where's Home?* categorically shows that it is increasingly difficult for low- and modest-income people in Ontario to find safe, affordable and appropriate rental housing options. From the report, we learn the following facts about renters in Ontario: "Just under half a million families with children (403,900) rented their housing in Ontario, representing 31% of tenant households. Seventeen per cent ... or 221,700 households were families headed by couples and 14% were headed by lone parents," some 182,000 households.

These figures tell us that dependent children are members of families that rent. And, of course, children rely on their parents' income to provide all their necessities of life.

The report was done jointly with the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada.

When the report came out, Harvey Cooper, manager, government relations at CHF Canada, Ontario region, stated that the findings of the report "clearly demonstrate that the gap between homeowners and tenants' incomes is growing ever wider, and many Ontarians of low and modest means are struggling to find a home that they can afford." He went on to say, "I worry about families being forced to choose between paying for the necessities of life, putting food on the table and paying the rent."

The well-being of the entire family is tied to their income. No family needs the added stress of not knowing if the cost of their home is going to become unaffordable to them.

A person's physical environment can have an impact on their health and well-being, and if that person is a parent, it can also impact their ability to parent and provide for their children.

This government recognizes the importance of good housing for Ontario residents, and housing has indeed been a focus of our work. The steps this government has already taken are improving people's access to stable, safe and affordable housing. The Housing Services Act, 2011, which took effect on January 1 of this year, is an example of this. The act supports better decision-making at the local level, particularly through the requirement for local housing and homelessness plans. It includes new accountability requirements to measure and publish a report on local and province-wide progress and to ensure that housing resources are used in the best way possible and are delivering results for people.

In November, the minister announced the signing of the new Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario

funding agreement with the federal government—a combined investment of some \$481 million under a new affordable housing agreement. It will create over 5,000 jobs in the province and continue to reduce the number of households in housing need.

We are committed to working to address a variety of housing needs in this province, from homeowners, renters, shelter victims of family violence to affordable housing for low-income families. Funding will be provided through the new agreement to create and repair affordable housing and provide rental and down payment assistance to families to make housing more affordable.

The Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario program builds on our record of providing some \$2.5 billion in affordable housing—more than any previous government. This allocation will build and repair more than 270,000 units and will provide some 35,000 rent supplements.

To date, Ontario's housing investments since 2003 have created over 57,000 jobs across our province.

Under the Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario program, municipal partners will be allocated a notional amount of funds which may be used to address local housing priorities.

We are improving the affordable housing system from the ground up, building a strong foundation based on four key pillars: putting people first, creating strong partnerships, supporting affordable options, and accountability.

This government understands that affordable housing opens doors to a better and brighter future for everyone. We continue to move forward and to work on behalf of all Ontarians on housing issues, and that is also the focus of the proposed amendment. We want to help Ontario families meet their needs and keep their rent within budget and, hopefully, contribute to keeping their family life stable.

1620

This will have a large positive effect on children, which is something we all want. Stability is a key to a happy and healthy family, for both adults and children. This proposed amendment will help by giving Ontario families one less thing to worry about.

Tenants in Ontario cover many demographics when it comes to age, income, number of family members living in the household and other measurable values. They have many different profiles, and the statistics show us just how wide a segment of the population they represent. Calculations of future housing demands take all these groups into account, and when looking at future needs of the rental market, I again quote from ONPHA's report:

"Rental demand is expected to increase over the next decades.

"According to Ministry of Finance projections, Ontario's population is projected to grow by over 3.5 million people over the next 25 years, reaching an estimated 16.7 million people by July 1, 2031.

"Over the longer term, there will continue to be strong growth among those age groups most likely to seek rental housing."

Reading the details of the different scenarios provided in the report about the population growth expected in Ontario and how it will affect the rental housing market is truly eye-opening. We see that immigration levels to the province are expected to increase and reach 152,000 newcomers per year by 2030-31. Population projections also show that by 2031, almost four million people in Ontario will be seniors aged 65 and over. The number of seniors aged 75 and over is projected to more than double in the same time period, to almost 1.8 million. ONPHA's report also summarizes for us what the future may look like in the province when it comes to seniors:

"Recent trends suggest that the proportion of seniors moving from home ownership to rental may decrease somewhat; however, given the substantial increase in the total number of seniors, there will still be a high demand for appropriate and affordable rental accommodation for those aged 65 and over."

The information about renters in younger age groups and how they will impact the future rental market is just as significant. In fact, across the board, the predictions are for a greater demand for rental housing for most age groups.

As we move towards this picture of the rental future in Ontario, we have to look for housing solutions, but we also have to be ready for whatever economic reality comes our way. The proposed amendment would give us the necessary flexibility to assess a changing economic climate and its impact on rental housing.

It is clear—population and housing experts expect there will be a steady increase in the continued demands for rental housing in our province. Their predictions tell us that the demand for housing will be coming from immigrants, seniors and other segments of the population that will undoubtedly only continue to grow.

Estimates of annual demands for rental housing in the next decade are high, and renters will continue to make up a significant part of the housing market. Our government's proposed amendment might just be one of the solutions that could possibly ease the burden for tenants who find themselves in difficult situations. Our government wants to help tenants, and we believe this proposed amendment would be a step in the right direction, a step towards helping them.

Our government is looking for solutions, and I am confident that Bill 19 would be one of those solutions. That is why our government is proposing this amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006. We believe it would serve Ontario tenants well, now and in the future. We have to remain focused on the future and move towards it, ready and prepared—prepared for the forecasts from the reports I quoted from today. More reports and statistics will be updated, and we need to be ready if the proposed amendment is passed. As stated, it provides for future reviews of the proposed 2.5% capping of the rent increase guideline. The proposed amendment would also require a review of the annual rent increase guideline formula every four years. This is a reasonable period of time to collect adequate data and evaluate how the formula is working.

Our government believes that the proposed amendment would provide the much-needed safeguards tenants require. We also believe it would provide a solution and some stability for them. I urge all members to support this bill. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I rise to actually speak as the critic on housing and municipal affairs to this Bill 19, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act. The bill aims to make rent more affordable and predictable by capping the allowable rent increases to be charged by private landlords at 2.5%. The annual guideline is linked to inflation, and high levels of inflation in the past forced that percentage to exceed 3%. The bill will make a very small dent in the crisis of housing affordability here in the province of Ontario.

We heard from seven deputants this past week on the issue, one actually advocating for landlords and the rest advocating for tenants. It was interesting to hear some of the things they had to say. We as a party put forward nine amendments to this bill, but unfortunately, we were kind of hamstrung by the narrow scope of the bill. While we attempted to get unanimous consent on some of those amendments, we were either ruled out of order or defeated in recorded votes. But on a positive note, we did get one of our amendments through, which was to remove the 1% floor in the annual guideline amount, replacing it with no floor—which will go a small way to assisting people if the rate of inflation falls below 1%. I think that the bill, while it requires the annual rent guideline to be set between 0% now and 2.5%, also allows for a review every four years to adjust those rates.

Deputants at the committee actually supported the bill as a small step forward in improving affordability but stated that it clearly didn't go far enough to ensure affordability of rents, and hence they proposed a number of amendments which we brought forward.

We worked in four ways to strengthen that bill. We first heard numerous calls on the Residential Tenancies Act to close the current gaps in rent control, so vacancy decontrol and exemption of units constructed after 1991. I said when this bill was originally introduced several months ago that it was actually the NDP at the time, so we took responsibility for actually putting that amendment in. But at the time, it was to try to spur development of rental units across the province. Developers, of course, told us that if we put that amendment in, that if we passed that legislation, they would come and build units. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. Likewise, we introduced amendments to Bill 19 to ensure that the annual guideline limit would apply to new renters and to renters in units built after 1991. Unfortunately, the government refused to consider these motions.

Presenters at the committee also called for stronger enforcement of outstanding work orders. I've met with a number of advocates for tenants across the province over the last six months, in my own riding as well as here in Toronto. Some of the conditions that tenants are living in

are deplorable. I heard from one man who said that his elevator didn't work for a period of three years. I know the government suggests that these work orders are a municipal issue and that municipalities have bylaws to deal with the work orders, but in fact, at the end of the day, what we actually hear from tenants and from these advocacy groups is that it's cheaper to pay the fines than it is to actually do the work, so in many cases the repairs are not getting done.

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So we proposed an amendment that would have set the annual guideline increase at 0% for units that have outstanding work orders. What we were looking for here was that if you had an outstanding work order and you had it on record with the municipality, that in fact they couldn't increase your rent at all this year until they fixed the work that was needed to be repaired. But the advocates wanted to go even further, Speaker. They actually wanted to have us put an amendment in, which would have been ruled out of order as well, to set up an escrow account, so if they had outstanding work orders, their total rent—in the city of Toronto the average rent is almost \$1,200 a month; in the city of Hamilton the rent is almost \$900 a month on average—that money would actually go into an escrow account to be held by the municipality, perhaps, until those work repairs were finished. Our amendment didn't pass to actually not allow landlords to put the rent increase to those tenants that had work orders outstanding.

In sum, the bill was modestly strengthened at committee, but much more could have been done to ensure affordability and protection for tenants. There are about 1.3 million tenant households in Ontario and 125,000 living in co-ops, accounting for one third of the population here in Ontario. Over 13% of households live in poverty in Ontario and 627,000 are unable to afford shelter that meets adequacy, suitability and affordability, placing them in a core housing need. Most, but not all, of these are tenants. According to a 2006 census, 45%—almost half the population of tenant households—pay 30% or more of their household income on shelter. One in five pays more than 50%. So you can see that the risk of homelessness continues to increase. Thousands more stay in homeless shelters across the province. The high cost of rent is one major reason why there are more than a million visits to food banks here in the city of Toronto and across the province.

There were 152,000 low-income households across Ontario on active waiting lists for social housing at the beginning of 2011. This is an increase of 7.4%, or 10,500 people. After eight years, the government did develop a long-term housing strategy. Unfortunately, it didn't put any funding in place and did not have any targets, nor does it have any timelines—and not one penny announced for new affordable housing in this term of government.

Housing investment creates jobs. They stimulate the local economy and provincial economic activity, generating more revenues back to the province. There needs to

be a long-term commitment, but it needs to have targets, it needs to have funding and it needs to have some sustainability.

Provincial housing policy has been made in Ottawa with the province simply following the lead of the federal government and signing off, often with delays of several years. In, I think, 2003, the McGuinty government actually promised 80,000 units of affordable housing, and it actually only built—or 20,000 units; I correct myself. And over eight years, it's only produced 80% of that.

So the bill will provide some little help for private landlords to do some rent increases, with 90 days' notice, once every 12 months. Landlords who want to go higher than that have to make application to the Landlord and Tenant Board, and it's in conjunction with the consumer price index, which is a Stats Canada calculation.

The CPI has been significantly increasing, though, recently, and tenants who are now paying much higher hydro costs and paying the HST on their utility bills are now going to face a higher rent increase, potentially, along with those high utility bills.

The 2012 guideline increase came at the same time when people were coming out of a recession. We've lost many jobs. We have 600,000 people in this province without a job, and now we are going to be seeing the ability for landlords to actually increase the rents for these people. Putting limits on the guideline increase will provide more stability, perhaps, which is important for tenants who live on fixed incomes in this province.

The limitations of the bill: When we talk to the advocates for tenants, groups do not think that the guideline is the biggest problem when it comes to affordability. According to the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, if the bill had been in place, it would have only reduced a \$1,000 monthly rent by \$3 over the last two years. So it isn't a huge savings for tenants. Bigger problems need to be addressed.

It could have some negative impacts on social housing providers who have some market-rent units in their affordable housing buildings. It may impact them because they may not be able to charge those market rents at the higher rate, which is part of the program that provides affordable housing for others.

It fails to address vacancy decontrol, which allows landlords to increase the rent any amount on vacant units once they become vacant. That needs to be eliminated. The protection of security of tenure was one of the principal reasons that vacancy decontrol was introduced into rent regulation. However, the RTA allows the landlord to charge any amount of rent to new tenants when moving into vacant units. As a result, vacancy decontrol, over time, decreases the number of rental units that are affordable to seniors on fixed incomes, young people just entering the job market, people who are unemployed, households on social assistance and sole-support families. So we need to actually deal with this vacancy decontrol piece. There are many people that I've talked to over the past few months who are very concerned about this issue, and we need to be doing something about it.

In 2003, during the provincial election, the Liberals promised, "We will get rid of vacancy decontrol, which allows unlimited rent increases on a unit when a tenant leaves. It will be gone." However, their promise was about regional rent control, which would have been dependent on vacancy rates below a threshold at which tenants have a real choice. It was so complicated to administer, it never happened. Action is needed now to ensure that vacancy decontrol is dealt with.

This bill fails to reintroduce rent regulation to private market-rental units, regardless of the date of construction. I talked about this a few minutes ago. It was introduced in 1999. It was supposed to stimulate development. That didn't happen. In fact, only 55,000 units have been built since 1999. There have been hundreds of thousands of units of condos built in cities, but as far as apartment dwellings go, it didn't happen.

Across Ontario, there has been little new purpose-built rental housing built. Based on future population growth, the estimate is that we'll need 10,000 units of purpose-built rental housing units over the next eight or nine years.

The condo rental units built in the last 10 years form an ever-increasing part of the rental market in urban centres, but generally they're very expensive to rent. I can tell you, when I was looking for an apartment when I was elected last October, I couldn't find anything here in the downtown core that was under \$1,700 a month, \$1,800 a month, and some of those were even in disrepair. The rents tend to be higher in the condo market, and that impacts affordability as well.

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This bill fails to protect tenants, ensuring that rental units are kept in a proper state of repair. Landlords should not be allowed to increase rents while there are outstanding work orders. The NDP in the past has proposed landlord licensing. This would have been one way to ensure that if there are repairs outstanding, before you got your licence renewed you had to make good with those repairs. But once again I'll repeat that landlords are paying the fines instead of doing the work because it's cheaper to pay the fines than it is to make the repairs, unfortunately.

I'm not saying that all landlords are bad landlords; I'm sure there are many great landlords across this province. But we don't hear about them very often; we only hear about the bad landlords, and we've all heard about it.

This legislation also fails to address above-guideline rent increases. It allows landlords to raise rents by up to 9% per application—3% in each of three years for capital repairs, conservation, tax increases, utility cost increases and security equipment. Landlords are already allowed to increase rents automatically by inflation—the guideline—and then they're allowed to increase it again for these repairs.

According to groups like the board of Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, the practice of above-guideline rent increases should be ceased or limited in the following ways: limiting AGIs to conservation initia-

tives; limiting an application to once every five years; and perhaps capping it at 6%: 2% in each year over three years. But we believe that the practices actually need to be reviewed to ensure that affordability is there for tenants.

The legislation also fails to establish loan funds to take the funding burden off of landlords for repairs and off of tenants. Landlords have previously argued that AGIs are necessary in order to get financing, but we think that if there was a loan fund available to them, maybe we would see some more repairs getting done.

The NDP has taken a lot of actions on tenants' rights. The member from Parkdale-High Park introduced five different bills between 2007 and 2010 around landlord licensing, vacancy decontrol, and closing the loophole around units that are exempt. In each and every case, those bills were voted against by both the government of the day and the opposition party. The provision to close the loophole which allows uncontrolled rent increases on vacant units, the rent control loophole that allows exemptions of the units built after 1991, and the landlord licensing bill to protect tenants from excessive utility increases: All of those were not supported by either the Liberals or the Conservatives in the last sitting of the Legislature.

What else needs to be done to make rent more affordable and to protect tenants? Well, we believe we need to close those loopholes in rent control. Landlords are exploiting the fact that rent control doesn't apply to vacant units. What we heard at our deputations and what I've heard across the province is that landlords actually go after tenants to try and get them to move out of their unit so that then they can bump up the rent. That is really not right. The reason for the legislation is to ensure that there are affordable units for people to rent across this province, and for landlords to be able to do that is just not right.

We also heard from people that they would like the legislation to change in a way that prevented landlords from moving them out so that they could move a family member in.

Cracking down on the bad landlords: too many landlords getting away without doing the repairs. We said during the election campaign that we would crack down on them by bringing forward some legislation with respect to landlord licensing.

We need to increase the supply of affordable housing. During the election, we promised to build over 50,000 new units of affordable housing over the next 10 years. As I said, the Liberal government has not promised one single unit of affordable housing new-starts in this term.

We need to make rent more affordable because more than 50% of tenants are paying more than 30% of their income on rent.

During the election campaign, we promised to phase in a housing benefit. We had that discussion actually at committee with the advocates. The landlords, of course, thought that was a great idea, because the government would be paying the housing benefit. The tenant advo-

cates, although they said it would be welcomed, said it still wouldn't go the long way that needs to be gone to make sure that there are enough affordable housing units in the province and enough rent-controlled units in the province.

I think we need to reduce the cost of heating and hydro. We introduced a bill, which was supported by the official opposition, to take the HST off of home heating bills. That bill hasn't come forward yet. We're still waiting to have the government bring it forward so that we can pass it at third reading. The Liberals seem to be content to let the cost of heating and hydro increase.

I think the last, though, and the most important piece is that housing is a human right. The United Nations has declared that all people have the right to decent, affordable housing. And Canada is part of that; we've ratified that treaty. We have fought, and we will continue to fight, to ensure the fundamental right to housing is recognized in Ontario law. But to be able to do that, we need to pass some of these amendments that I'm talking about here today. We need to introduce some legislation. I'll certainly be doing that if I get to my private member's bill and hope to have the support of some of my colleagues in both of the other parties to make sure that there is safe and affordable housing here in the province for 1.3 million people. The Liberals actually voted down an amendment to their recent housing act that would have recognized housing as a human right. That was in the last sitting of the Legislature.

I'm going to save some of my time for my colleagues in my party. I'm going to end now by saying we will be supporting this bill, because it will make a very small bit of difference, hopefully, in the lives of many of the tenants here in the province. I wanted to thank the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek for his assistance at committee and once again to thank members of both of the other parties for supporting the one lowly amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to weigh in on this bill. When I first spoke on this bill for 10 minutes, when it was at second reading, I found that it was a bit of a stretch. Now, speaking for another few minutes while it's come to third reading is even more difficult. In that respect, I am thankful for this programming motion that's actually limiting the amount of debate that we have on this particular bill.

It isn't that there isn't all that much to say about this bill, and it's not that it's not an important issue, because it really is. It's that there isn't really all that much substance to the bill, which originally intended to limit rent increases to 1% to 2.5% and now, thanks to the NDP amendment, limits increases from 0% to 2.5%, so it actually is possible to go a year without a rent increase.

This bill does very little to make rent more affordable, and it does nothing to ensure that there are liveable, well-repaired units for people who need shelter. After this bill's passage, we will still have 45% of Ontario's tenant

households, as my colleague mentioned, paying 30% or more of their household income on shelter costs. That's over 580,000 households—not Ontarians but households—who will be paying over 30% of their income on shelter costs. We will still have thousands of people staying at homeless shelters in Ontario, and in Toronto, in this city alone, there are over 22,000 people who are homeless.

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After the passage of this bill, we will still have rent being one of the highest costs and one of the major reasons why there are more than one million visits to Toronto and area food banks.

I'm not trying to be cynical, but it is difficult, especially when we have these bills, bills like this, which do very little, other than basically, I'm going to suggest, wasting our time by debating them, instead of debating more meaningful bills which serve as—well, all this bill will really do, in my opinion, is just serve as a speaking point for all that the government is doing to help Ontarians.

If you mentioned any of these facts to the government, I'm sure what we would hear back is that we are living in tough economic times and that this is the reason for this austerity, that we're in a deficit situation and therefore we can't afford to make the sweeping and meaningful changes that are needed, changes like creating more affordable rental units across this province which, although it's always important, is that much more important now, given our economic climate and job loss and things like uploading the subsidy provided by municipalities on the local tax base to people with low incomes, or creating more supportive housing to help our seniors stay out of long-term care when they don't actually need long-term care.

I certainly understand that these are tough times across the province, but that doesn't absolve us of our responsibility to ensure that people have the respect of affordable and decent places to live. If anything, it should remind us of the importance of having affordable rental options. It should also underscore the point that we need to invest now so that we can be prepared for this type of situation in the future and, more immediately, so that we can set the conditions that are necessary for us to get back on our feet.

Tough times might mean that we can't invest today as much as we had intended and need to, but it still means that we have to invest. If we don't, we will get caught unprepared to meet the demand, which will only serve to further stall our recovery.

As I said, I'm not trying to be cynical, but it does make me wonder why the government is so dead set on passing bills into law, much like this one, that really don't do a whole lot.

I can understand that it is the end of the legislative session in the spring and the government is very likely, and understandably, wanting to have something to show for the session, but why place so much emphasis on passing bills like this one that are so light on substance?

It almost seems to me as though this is a government that doesn't really have a plan. Maybe, after eight years, the government is tired and has used up all of its A-list ideas. Maybe it wasn't expecting re-election. I can't really say. But what is clear is that so much more can be done to really help people in meaningful ways that won't necessarily break the bank and that won't add to our bottom line, because we do have a tremendous opportunity with this minority government where we can work together.

If the government is short on ideas about how we can improve life for people beyond the walls, beyond this Legislature, who are struggling just to make ends meet, then why can't we work together? No one is saying that the responsibility is on one side of the House, not in a minority government. Why can't the Liberals get together with the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP to formulate bills that may not necessarily add to our deficit but can add to the quality of life of Ontarians? And I really am not meaning this in a partisan or disrespectful way. I just believe that we do have an opportunity to work together in a manner that we don't usually have in this adversarial, first-past-the-post system and that we can accomplish good work here.

For those of you who I've had the pleasure of sitting down with and had a chance to get to know, I can say that there are a great many people in this House who ran and got involved in politics for honest and very well-intentioned reasons, because they really did want to make a positive difference in the lives of their neighbours, their co-workers and their community members. And for me, I just want to leave Ontario in a better state than it was when I first got elected, and I don't even care if I get the credit. I just want to take this opportunity when I'm speaking on this bill to issue this challenge of working together on all sides of the House.

Getting back to the bill itself, I just want to close by saying that, as much as I think that much more can be done and should be done to improve the affordability of essentials in this province and that this bill really doesn't address those things in a meaningful way, I will be supporting this bill at third reading because, ultimately, this bill does take a step in the right direction, however small.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'll pick up where my colleague left off in that I'll begin my remarks by saying, similarly, that the initiative to control rent is a good initiative, and it's an initiative that we will support and that I will support. However, I'd like to split up my remarks with some comments with respect to some of the work that we were able to do to improve the bill and then by looking at some of the areas that were not touched by this bill that we should work towards improving or addressing.

One of the issues that we are very familiar with—and I think everyone has personal experience with or has constituents who have spoken to them about—is that rent is becoming more and more difficult. The cost of living is increasing, not only in terms of rent. All of the daily

necessities' prices are increasing. Wages are not increasing, and in fact many people are in a difficult circumstance where they're not even employed at the time. This is all a recipe for a very tense and a very precarious position for many families, and so the notion of addressing rent increases is a positive thing.

To look at some of the work that the NDP was able to do—we were able to impact the bill in a number of ways, and I believe some of my colleagues have already touched on this.

First and foremost, as a policy and as a strategy to addressing any concerns that come up in this House, I think what we need to do is consider the people. What are their concerns? What are their problems? What can we do to directly address their issues and their lives? I think to address that, we must be cognizant of the power and the usefulness of consultations and public consultations.

We heard from a number of people who gave deputations in the committee, and I'll just list a couple of remarks that were made. ACORN and Parkdale Community Legal Services indicated that Bill 19 is something that's supported because it will limit annual rent increases, but the bill doesn't go far enough. The deputants all had a common theme: that the bill addresses one need—and I think many of the people in the House have addressed this—one concern, one area of protection for the consumer, but there is a host of other areas that were not addressed.

To address that lack in the bill, some of the weaknesses in the bill, I can read from deputation from an organization called the Federation of Rental-Housing Providers of Ontario. They indicate that the amendment is disappointing. Capping rent is only a stopgap measure. It doesn't go far enough into addressing some of the real concerns which are the lack of affordable housing.

When we look at the Human Rights Code in Ontario, when we look at the rights that we protect, it's a hallmark of a democratic and free society that we have protections for rights such as the ability to express ourselves, the freedom of expression, the ability to practise our religions—religious freedoms—freedom of association, but these are all negative rights. These are rights where we're not able to infringe on someone's ability to engage in society. But there is a hole in our society. There's a hole in Ontario, where positive rights are not recognized.

1700

A positive right which would impact people in Ontario is the human right of housing as a right. There are jurisdictions where housing as a right have been recognized. New York state is one example. The idea is that, as a society where we believe we have a responsibility to care for our fellow humans, having a positive right to housing would be a true sign of respect and dignity shown to the lives of others, those who don't have the means to afford housing, afford a roof over their heads. It's in that area that the bill is lacking in terms of addressing the stark lack of housing.

In my riding, I can address some of the concerns. I know many other members may have their own stories or

their own examples of constituents talking about the lack of housing and the housing waiting list. In Peel region alone, there were 15,301 households on the waiting list for social assistance in 2011. That's 15,301 households waiting for a home—10.1% of the total active households on the list.

The service manager in Peel region indicates that singles and families on the chronological waiting list are not gaining access to subsidized housing and are waiting longer and longer. One of the most startling facts is that the wait time that people have to wait to qualify for affordable housing is approximately 15 years. The approximate wait time for social housing is estimated at up to 15 years, which is amongst the highest in the province.

In Peel region, the region I represent, Bramalea–Gore–Malton is among the ridings where this stark need is at its worst. The fact that there are so many people who don't have a home and who are waiting on a list to gain access to affordable housing—it's truly saddening that we don't have the space for these families. Peel region is ranked in the top five areas experiencing the largest increase in the number of households waiting for housing. I'm sure this is true across the province, and I'm sure this is true in many other ridings.

It really calls to mind the fact that, while we are addressing the annual rent increases, what are we doing for those who are waiting for housing, period? What are we doing for those who are waiting for affordable housing? What are we doing for those who are on waiting lists and simply have no access to any option to house themselves? Speaking about housing as a human right and recognizing that as a human right would provide some greater initiative and perhaps could provide us some greater motivation to address this serious concern.

The United Nations has declared that all people have a right to decent, affordable housing, as an organization that recognizes the human rights of all people as a birthright, a right that you are entitled to simply by no other justification than your birth. This treaty that recognizes housing and the right to decent and affordable housing as a human right is something that Canada has ratified.

As a country that has recognized and ratified this right, I call a challenge to this government and to every member of this House to work towards satisfying that treaty. We've signed that treaty. We recognize that that is a noble and a positive and the right step to do, that people should have a right—not just the option or the luxury of—to affordable housing and to decent housing. If it's something that we recognize, we should do something about that.

Here's a challenge to my colleagues across the floor, the Liberal members, my challenge to my colleagues beside us in the opposition: Let's follow through on this treaty. If we truly believe that there should be a right to housing, then let's take the steps to ensure that happens. Let's make this a priority. Let's take it a step further than just controlling rent and make life more affordable for people.

The Liberals voted down an amendment to its recent housing act that would have recognized housing as a human right. That goes to show what the priorities of this government are. Are we truly committed to making life more affordable? Are we truly here to serve the people of Ontario? Are we truly here to serve the people if this government is voting down an amendment which would recognize housing as a human right?

I've spoken about and addressed the fact that housing as a human right and the access to affordable housing has not been addressed. What else can we do to address this issue of housing? There are issues of tenant rights, there are issues of landlords who provide living conditions which are not livable, and there should be some strong legislation that ensures that tenants have greater protections when it comes to those landlords who provide living conditions which are substandard. That's something that we should not accept here in the province of Ontario, and we should ensure that this government protects the rights of tenants by having stronger laws to protect those tenants in the face of landlords who don't provide decent living in their premises.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, and in my capacity as the critic for municipal affairs and housing, I'm pleased to provide some comments on the record to Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline.

I have to say, looking back at the bill—it was introduced for first reading back on December 6—it was interesting because there was a bill yesterday that was brought into the House, Bill 11, that was debated. It had actually been tabled a week before, so it's interesting the way that some of these bills get introduced early and then don't seem to make it on the government's agenda to come forward.

This bill was introduced by Minister Wynne on December 6. Looking back, it's hard to believe that nearly three months have gone by since I did my leadoff on second reading. However, even though those months have passed, it really hasn't changed my position or that of my caucus. We cannot support this legislation because it's really nothing more than yet another attempt by the government members opposite to be seen as doing something when in reality they're not doing much of anything on this file.

Now, some of the New Democrat speakers have made points earlier. We all suspect that with the NDP support the government will pass this piece of legislation and perhaps there'll be some tenants that will cheer. After all, members of the government have been standing up and touting this bill as some sort of godsend to tenants. I think they've really got the hard sell out trying to market this bill and I'm reminded of the old line that if something is too good to be true, it probably is. I probably am going to digress, so I may not go down that road.

It's a hard sell to the public that the government would have us believe. By putting Bill 19 on the books, they

would make you believe that all of the affordable housing issues will be solved and will be finished. It's quite an astonishment for a bill that's really this thin. When you look at it, it's really a four-page bill. You take the cover and the explanatory note—it's really quite thin. As was mentioned earlier, there was one amendment that all the parties supported.

The bottom line, though, is that this bill is going to do absolutely, positively nothing to create more affordable housing spaces. It will do absolutely nothing to address the chronic issue of people on our waiting lists, waiting for affordable housing spaces. And it certainly is not going to give any relief—real relief—to tenants by passing Bill 19.

1710

It would be easy, I suggest, for our caucus to hold our noses and play the same game that the government is playing by voting for a bill and pretending that we're on the side of tenants. We're not going to do that, because I believe there are some serious problems that face tenants and landlords in the province. I truly believed, back in December, prior to the introduction of this bill, and before that, that this minister could do better than the bill that she's offering for debate today. It's because of that fact that I believe that we made the right stand, the very principled stand, as an opposition, that we were not going to support this do-nothing bill when the time demands real action from the province.

Let's take a look at what the bill does to understand what I'm saying. I mentioned a few moments ago that it's only four pages. It's very thin on details. It amends, as some of the previous speakers have said, section 120 of the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, the section of the act that sets the formula that's used in Ontario to calculate the allowable annual rent increase. The reason that this is such a time-sensitive bill is the rate is set by August 31 every year and takes effect the subsequent calendar year; so if passed, the new formula is going to be used this summer to establish the guideline for the 2013 rate increase.

Since the Residential Tenancies Act, or RTA, was implemented by this government, that annual increase has been tied to the consumer price index, and it will continue to be, in some respects, under this amendment. What Bill 19 does is unnecessarily expand the government's influence over the province's rental housing market by establishing a ceiling for those rent increases. Regardless of where CPI falls, under Bill 19, the maximum allowable rent increase would be 2.5%.

One thing has changed, as I mentioned earlier, about this bill. Originally, the bill had a clause that would provide a floor of 1%. It has since, in this amended version that has come forward for third reading, had that section removed. So it is possible, given CPI, that the rent increases, like they were the previous year, could be lower than that 1%. So the floor has now vanished from this bill, despite assurances by the government to some groups that the bill would come out of committee for third reading unchanged. There's a little change. Aside

from committing the minister to a review every four years, this is it; this is the bill that the government has put forward.

For those tenants who are watching at home today, I'm sure that some of you are going to say, "Hey, a cap on rent increases sounds like a pretty good idea." Well, I just want to caution you: Not so fast.

We first need to take a look at some history to prove whether this legislation was actually something that Ontarians needed.

Since 2006, there were just two times that this bill would have actually come into effect: in 2007, when the increase was 2.6%; and most famously, last year, when the 2012 increase was pegged at 3.1%. So if we look at the 10-year average for rent increases, we see just why our caucus has been calling this bill unnecessary. Over 10 years, the average rent increase was 2.1%, a figure, I note, that is below the 2.5% cap established in Bill 19. If we look at the past five years, we see that the average increase was 1.7%. As I said before, Bill 19 is nothing more than unwanted interference by government in an area that I suggest the market has already been looking after itself.

Speaker, we all know the reason why the bill is in front of us today, and that's due to that single anomaly that has taken place in Ontario over the past 10 years when it comes to those rent increase percentages. We're here debating this bill because of a 3.1% increase that hit tenants right at the 2012 guideline, in the month of August, during a time when many ridings were already starting that pre-election mode.

What the minister seems reluctant to talk about is that she cites CPI as the reason why the cost of living went up. She might also recall a tax that her government introduced against howls of outrage in July 2010.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I think it was the HST, Speaker, and I think I got a rise from the front bench.

In a twisted sort of way, it's interesting that this is actually a piece of legislation for a Premier who is such a big fan of bureaucracy and big government. All that, I suggest, is the perfect recipe for why we are here with Bill 19 today. Government creates a problem in the first place in terms of the HST and then they use that increase in CPI as the reason for bringing Bill 19 forward. So they create a problem and now they decide they're going to give new legislation to fix the problem that that created. So this bill isn't about any problem that we have in the rental market. It simply exists because of the HST by Dalton McGuinty and this Liberal government. When the HST was applied to every good, every service, it's no surprise that when you look at the cost and, ultimately, the CPI—it's no surprise. Hence, we had a 3.1% increase in the rent guideline that followed a year later. So the bill is an attempt, I suggest, of this government to try to rewrite history.

The CPI isn't just some number that statisticians make up. It's calculated, as we all know, from a number of items, including food, shelter, transportation and the cost

of basic items. Under Dalton McGuinty, we know that these costs for seniors, for young families, for men, for women, and for children in every part of this province continue to go up and up and up. Much of that is as a result of their own HST, and still the government feels no shame using a problem it created as an opportunity for them to be seen as on the side of tenants. Yep, the folks who gave you the HST and made you afraid to open your hydro bill are now riding to the rescue to protect tenants from those big, bad landlords who are jacking up the rents and laughing all the way to the bank. Fair enough. Your government has beaten up small businesses and manufacturers in every corner of the province of Ontario since 2003, so why shouldn't you take a couple of whacks at the landlords too?

Let's step back and crunch a few numbers, again, to examine the real impact of Bill 19 on the pocketbook of a tenant if it had been in place when the rent increase was announced last August. If the ceiling existed a year ago, that 3.1% increase would have been bumped back under this legislation to 2.5%. So I did some work and I looked at, in Leeds–Grenville, in the city of Brockville, the average rent paid for a three-bedroom apartment, according to CMHC, which is \$802. That's courtesy of CMHC. So you do some quick math. That family renting that apartment would save a grand total of—get this, Speaker—\$4.81 a month if Bill 19 had been in place last year. Yep, a whole \$4.81 a month, almost \$58 a year.

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I don't want to suggest here that we're not trying to help families save on the family budget. The family budget is very important. I know how tightly families are stretched today, mostly because of the high taxes, fees and energy prices and the failed energy policies that this government has put forward over the last nine years. I've said it many times in this House since I was first elected to represent the people of the great riding of Leeds–Grenville: I understand full well the hardships that they are facing because I'm out in the community talking to my constituents at every single possible opportunity.

Let's be honest. When people find out that this much-heralded piece of legislation is going to save them a few bucks at most per month, I suggest that they're going to be very disappointed. For the approximately 500 families on the waiting list for affordable housing in my riding, Bill 19 isn't going to hasten their move to a safe, secure place to raise their children. It's not going to stop the calls to my constituency office from people wanting to know why, after three years of waiting, they're still no closer to finding adequate shelter.

I'm confident that if I spoke to the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and asked them to address their share of the \$3-billion repair backlog that exists in municipally operated affordable housing projects, they're going to tell me they're not very confident with this bill.

Bill 19 isn't going to fix that leaky roof faster, get that person off the waiting list any faster, to help with one of the most basic human needs: shelter. This is tragic, because we all know—and many other speakers have said

this—that a home is the primary building block necessary for someone to start a successful life. Without a place to call home, I'd argue that a person has little or no hope of finding or holding on to a job, or getting the education or training that they need to get out of the cycle of poverty.

Here we are spending all this time on Bill 19, and what are we spending it on? We're pressing forward with a bill that's going to save a typical tenant in my riding less than five bucks, and that's on the rare occasion that the annual increase would actually exceed 2.5%. I'm sure that they'll want to organize a parade to honour the government's accomplishments. It's going to make headlines all over the province. Hip hip hooray. We're saving people a couple of bucks every month and costing them a lot more with your hated HST.

If the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing really wanted to put a bill forward today and to rise for the summer, I'd prefer that she would have pushed Bill 65 to be called. In fact, it was actually supposed to be on the order paper this week and was subsequently pulled off. It was actually on twice this week. That bill at least did something that all sides of the House feel is very necessary, and I'm not talking about the government finally keeping their promise on this bill, as they failed to do over the last several years. Bill 65 would take the long-overdue step of moving tenure disputes in non-profit housing co-ops from our overburdened court system into the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Instead of that bill and some of the other necessary and long-delayed reforms to the Landlord and Tenant Board, we get Bill 19. It's an empty promise, and it's an unnecessary piece of legislation, if I've ever seen one. The sad reality is, the few dollars that tenants are going to save are going to be quickly gobbled up with the next increase in electricity rates. It's ironic that we're talking about a bill to control rent increases when the 10-year average is below the ceiling that the government is actually seeking to establish.

You're so quick over there to go after the landlords, but you're not going to listen to our party when it comes to the real issues that are creating pain for tenants and other hard-working families right across Ontario.

Speaker, I want to give you some examples of the pain that tenants are facing. I think we need to look at hydro rates since 2003, when Premier McGuinty took office. Those rents have gone up an average of 2.1% in that time, yet electricity prices have gone through the roof. Rates have gone up 84%; 150%, if you have a smart meter. Some of us call them smart meter tax machines, but that was from six months ago.

If you look at the history that I've shared with you earlier, you'll realize that as well as that 84%—if you look at some of the other failed subsidy programs that the government is purporting on energy, energy prices, from their own estimates, are going to go up an additional 46%. If you look at a bill where the average tenant rent increases were 2.1%, what they faced: 84% increase in electricity—another 46% over the next five years. So much for that \$4.81 that Bill 19 is going to save my

constituents for that three-bedroom apartment in Brockville—not with those energy prices. When the Fraser Institute is reporting that Ontario energy consumers will pay an additional \$18 billion over the next 20 years just to pay for their green energy fiasco, it's a bit rich for anybody associated with this government to purport a big savings with Bill 19.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I appreciate that, Minister. You're very charitable, too. I appreciated seeing you at the Jays game last night. Congratulations again on your 35th anniversary.

I think my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke put it best when we were discussing one of these other government all-talk-no-action bills last week. I think it was Bill 2; that's the healthy homes renovation tax credit. I think if it was actually titled, it would be the wealthy homes renovation tax credit, because only seniors with 10 grand lying around really could take full advantage of that bill. As my colleague the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said last week, Bill 19 is another example that is designed to knock off that political domino on their agenda, when they look at a specific target group to say, "Look at what we've done for you."

As I stated, our caucus is not going to be a party to that kind of game. It's an opportunity—sorry, it's—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Enough with the games.

Mr. Steve Clark: That's right. It's an example of behaviour that is resulting in more and more people being turned off of politics.

Let's be clear, Speaker: This government has done nothing for tenants in Ontario, and Bill 19 is just a shell bill. It doesn't deal with the real issues that are facing tenants and landlords in the province of Ontario right now.

Something that I just want to mention, because I know that it's going to come forward, is the fact that a measure in this government's budget bill is to terminate the community start-up and maintenance benefit, CSUMB, on January 1 next year. Eliminating this program which helps people on social assistance both secure and maintain housing will have far-reaching negative effects in communities across the province. Speaker, I have an ODSP office right beside my constituency office. It has been there for the last couple of years. I know the problems facing those individuals, and I'm extremely worried about the decision the government has made, because I know that benefit is used by many constituents to be able to upgrade their housing, to be able to use that benefit every two years so that they're able to have a leg up and find better accommodation and provide a better life for themselves. So the folks that we're seeing today are not going to be helped by Bill 19.

I know I have a few moments left, Speaker. I just want to go through, quickly, why we're against this bill. First

of all, I've said right from day one that it's unnecessary. It ignores the reality that the fundamental reason people are having a problem is the lack of good-paying jobs. The government, again, has chosen this bill over other bills, which I suggest they'll have to justify to the people of Ontario after this session adjourns. There are a number of issues that we could have been talking about.

Also, consultation: I know that we had one day of hearings and another day with clause-by-clause. Just in closing, I want to hearken back to 1996, when the Harris government introduced the Tenant Protection Act. There were more than 260 deputations on that act. Hearings for that bill lasted for more than 80 hours. Then, a year later, the legislation that they tabled, Bill 96, was taken on the road and they had hearings in seven cities for more than 49 hours. They heard from 140 organizations and individuals; 400 deputations and over 100 hours of hearings.

Again, I just want to say that there are a number of other very pressing issues that the government could have brought forward on the housing file. I did make reference to Bill 65 for the co-ops; that was scheduled, then pulled off. Again, I feel that there was some political will early on in this session to talk about the more substantive issues, yet the government brought forward this piece and, again, it does not address what tenants are telling our party needs to be addressed.

Again, I want to reiterate: We're not creating any more spaces, we're not taking any more people off the waiting list. This is just a bill that tinkers around the edges and is not what substantive legislation needs to be for housing in the province of Ontario.

At that, Madam Speaker, I think I'll sit down and not provide any more comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 31, I am now required to put the question. Ms. Wynne has moved third reading of Bill 19. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Madam Speaker, I think I can work ourselves out of this situation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I have received a deferral slip. It will be until deferred votes on June 13.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is it the pleasure of the members that the motion carry? Carried.

The House adjourned at 1732.

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Wednesday 13 June 2012

Mercredi 13 juin 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 13 June 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 13 juin 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TOBY'S ACT (RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT BECAUSE OF GENDER IDENTITY OR GENDER EXPRESSION), 2012 LOI TOBY DE 2012 SUR LE DROIT À L'ABSENCE DE DISCRIMINATION ET DE HARCÈLEMENT FONDÉS SUR L'IDENTITÉ SEXUELLE OU L'EXPRESSION DE L'IDENTITÉ SEXUELLE

Ms. DiNovo moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 33, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to gender identity and gender expression /
Projet de loi 33, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui concerne l'identité sexuelle ou l'expression de l'identité sexuelle.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I move third reading and ask for unanimous consent to speak later to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Ms. DiNovo has moved third reading of Bill 33. Further debate? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on what definitely has been categorized as—and I will 100% agree—a historic day in the history of our province. I am very excited to speak on Bill 33, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to gender identity and gender expression, in short referred to as Toby's Act, co-sponsored by my colleague the MPP for Parkdale–High Park, whom I will speak a little later about, my colleague the MPP from Whitby–Oshawa and myself from Ottawa Centre.

This is a historic day because we are about to recognize, enshrine and codify the rights of trans Ontarians into our Human Rights Code. The last time we changed the Ontario Human Rights Code was in the mid-1980s. A lot of people will remember the debate that took place at that time because, at that time, we recognized the rights of gays and lesbians in our society by adding the term “sexual orientation” to the code. We were doing something remarkable as well, which opened the doors to

many incredible social changes in our society. We thought at that time that by just adding “sexual orientation” we were covering all kinds of people, but we recognized soon after that that was not the case, that we had excluded members of the trans community from the protections of the Human Rights Code. Today, we're taking that very important historic step forward by adding gender identity and gender expression in the Human Rights Code so that no human being is left outside the scope, the protection, of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

The other reason I believe this is extremely historic is because we are on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Ontario Human Rights Code. I wish that the member from Parkdale–High Park, the member from Whitby–Oshawa and I had designed this in such a way—not the case. It happened. But historic, indeed, that on the 50th anniversary we are taking yet another important, bold leadership step to modernize our human rights protection so that no Ontarian is left behind.

I want to take this opportunity to really recognize the work and persistence of the member from Parkdale–High Park. She is a great definition of a defender of those who need their voice to be spoken. She never steps back from speaking for the vulnerable in our community and she has used this Legislature—the perfect place to do so—to raise issues that need to be discussed. So I salute you, MPP DiNovo, for bringing this bill not once, not twice, not thrice, but four times to ensure that we protect the rights of the trans community. And thank you for working with the rest of us and bringing us into the fold as part of this debate, as part of this bill, to ensure that we get it done this time around.

I also want to recognize the MPP from Whitby–Oshawa for her courage in standing up for this important issue and putting her name. Too many times we get caught in partisan issues, we get caught in ideological labels and we make assumptions about ourselves and others as to how they will vote or speak on certain issues. I think that the member from Whitby–Oshawa demonstrated today in her work on this particular issue that ideology is of no consequence when it comes to the protection of human rights, and I salute her for that courage. Thank you very much.

I want to thank all the members who will be voting in support of this bill for demonstrating leadership, for doing exactly what needs to be done, which is our role, and that is that we always be on the lookout to protect Ontarians, that we be on the front lines of defending the rights of Ontarians. That, after all, as lawmakers, is our

ultimate responsibility, and I am excited, happy and feel fulfilled that we are about to do that with, hopefully, the passage of Bill 33, Toby's Act, which will codify gender identity and gender expression into the Human Rights Code.

But Speaker, most importantly, the people who deserve the recognition, many of them who have joined us today in the gallery, are the members of the trans community, for not giving up the fight, for believing in themselves for who they are, for seeking the recognition that is theirs to have. It's taken us that long to come along with you, to understand you and to do what is so right, but you did not let it go. You deserve the real recognition today when—I have to say “if”; by law I'm required to do that—this law is passed.

There are many among us from the trans community who unfortunately are not here to see the day, and we have to remember them, Madam Speaker. They are not here because they couldn't take the societal pressure that was put upon them. They are not here because they were discarded by society as outcasts, which should not be—is not—allowed in our society. They're not here because they choose not to be here because of how they were looked at.

0910

We need to change that, Madam Speaker. This bill is one step forward to accomplishing that. It's not going to happen overnight. But by enshrining, codifying, the rights of trans Ontarians into the Ontario Human Rights Code, I believe, I hope, that we're sending a very strong message out in the broader community that discrimination of any form against anyone, trans or not, is not allowed. It's unacceptable, and after today it's against the law.

That's something that we need to work on. We need to work on that in our workplaces. We need to work on it in our neighbourhoods, in our community centres, in our schools. I think Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, which this Legislature so courageously passed, is a bold step in that direction as well, so that we protect our children, because we have to start early. We can't wait for later; we have to start early to educate our children to accept everyone and to celebrate everyone. But that responsibility continues. That responsibility is on all of us.

I want to thank the members of the trans community, and a lot of the people who worked very, very hard on this issue are here today. Don't stop the work. We're getting the legal protection today, but we need to do the educating. We need to do the engagement. We need to continue to speak to people, to make them recognize that you are no different. We are all the same. That work, Speaker, I vouch to continue to do, along with the trans community in Ontario and in my community in Ottawa.

I think the other thing we are really demonstrating today is leadership, and hopefully we are sending a message across the country to all other jurisdictions. Hats off to the Northwest Territories for having that kind of protection some time ago. Hats off to other jurisdictions, like Manitoba and the House of Commons in Canada,

also looking at that protection. But there are more places than just these two places, and there are members of the trans community not only across Canada and across North America but across the globe. We need to make sure that these protections are accorded to them as well, because they deserve to be treated like all of us, and they deserve the protection of the Human Rights Code or any other relevant human rights legislation.

Madam Speaker, I will end my comments at that. I am reminded today yet again as to why I entered public service, the kind of things that I wanted to accomplish. This is definitely one big thing off my list of things to accomplish in terms of being a public servant, as a representative of my community of Ottawa Centre. We all have personal reasons that we bring forward when we run and we are elected to this place that motivate us, that drive us to get things done. This is one of the issues. Issues around human rights, making sure that we remain and live in an equal society, is an important one for me, and I will continue to work on this issue. I'm very happy to see that today we are about to make history.

Thank you very much, Speaker. I look forward to hearing the other speakers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It is an honour to be able to rise today to speak in favour of Bill 33, Toby's Act, for the third and final time. I have to say it's both surprising and wonderful to be here today. It's surprising because it has taken so long, first of all, to get here. There has been so much work done by many of the members who are present in the lobby today—in the gallery, I should say—who have worked long and hard on this, who have faced discrimination, harassment and marginalization as a result of the many misconceptions about trans people. But it's also wonderful that, once we actually got it here, into this legislative chamber, we're able to move it through so quickly. We only went through second reading at the end of May, we had committee hearings on Monday, and here we are for third and final reading. I think it is a testament to all of the hard work that you've put into it, all of the members here in the gallery today.

To my fellow members here in the chamber: I also would like to pay tribute to the member from Parkdale-High Park, who has laboured long and hard on this. On the fourth time, we've finally gotten it to third reading. To the member from Ottawa Centre, thank you for your tremendous leadership on this file as well. I think this is one of those rare occasions when we can come together and actually do something for the people we serve.

I was listening to the prayers this morning, actually, and the second prayer talked about giving us a deeper understanding of the people we serve, and I think that's what we have listened to over these last months and, in some cases, years. We have been educated in this process, and we have a much deeper understanding of some of the things that people in the trans community go through. That's why we're here today: to make sure that we amend our Human Rights Code to properly reflect the

need to protect the rights of everyone in our society, and that's what this is all about.

Here we are on the 50th anniversary of the passing of the Ontario Human Rights Code, and what we're doing here is to recognize gender identity and gender expression as something that cannot be discriminated against. That's something that I believe all of us as parliamentarians want: to make sure that we protect the rights of everyone in our society, and to give a voice to everyone in our communities, and I'm happy to be here to do that.

I would like to just comment on some of the presentations that we heard in committee, too, because I think some of the presenters had some very thoughtful expressions. I would just like to read a few of them. One was from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. I'd just like to read a couple of passages from the verbal presentation that they gave to us. Their presentation indicated that:

"Toby's Act is an essential step in providing full human rights protection for one of the most marginalized, economically and socially vulnerable groups in our society. Advocating for full human rights protection for trans Ontarians through legislation is an ethical and professional imperative consistent with registered nurses individually and collectively seeking to promote justice.

"Strengthening human rights protection enables people to be who they are. As was explained during the House of Commons debate on Bill C-389, a bill to amend federal legislation:

"Gender identity is a person's innate feeling of being male, female, both genders, neither or in between. It is not a reference to people's biological sex or their sexual orientation. Identity is something to be respected and honoured and gender identity is no different. Gender expression is the expression of that inner identity. It is the freedom to be, plain and simple, one's self.'" Madam Speaker, I agree.

Another group that presented was Queer Ontario, and they indicated that, "Amending the Ontario Human Rights Code to include 'gender identity' and 'gender expression' would not only rightfully extend social recognition and legal protections, but also symbolically celebrate the courage, tenacity, spirit, and resilience of the trans communities in the face of severe discrimination and hostility."

Finally, from Barbara Hall, the chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission: "Later this week, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Ontario Human Rights Code. The code has been amended many times during that period, including adding new protection for sex, disability and sexual orientation. The code has evolved as society's understanding of human rights has grown and evolved. The time is right, now, to amend the code to recognize, promote and protect the rights of transgender individuals." Again, Madam Speaker, I fully agree.

I think what's amazing is that this is happening not just provincially but also federally. As you know, there was a vote taken in the House of Commons last week on

second reading to pass a bill very similar to Toby's law, and I'm very proud to say that it did pass. I'm proud to say it was also supported by my federal member, the member from Whitby—Oshawa, who also supported this bill, so we're certainly ad idem at home on that issue. But I think this is something that is important that we recognize at both the federal and provincial levels, and I hope that will happen in provincial Legislatures across Canada—and I believe that's already happening in at least one other province.

Finally, in closing, I would just like to say, Madam Speaker, that we can't lose sight of the fact of the inspiration for this bill, Toby Dancer, who unfortunately is not here to see this bill passed. But in Toby's memory and in thinking about all of the other people whom this bill is meant to support and protect, I am very pleased to be able to stand here today and fully support it. It is, in fact, a historic day. Congratulations to everyone involved in this.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Madam Speaker.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Bien sûr. Madam Speaker, madame le Président—it's a rather extraordinary day. You don't often in your life get a chance to be part of making history. I think this is a first in Canada, and it has been a rather incredible two weeks with Bill 13 last week and with this and making the world safer for a lot of kids.

In my many years of working on the streets of two Canadian cities—the one I grew up in, Montreal, and the one I lived in and was mayor of, Winnipeg—I used to often comment, working with gay and lesbian and transgender youth, that one of the worst moments I ever experienced was what I used to call when a child gives up hope, seeing a 12- or 14-year-old where the light has gone out of their eyes, when they've come to a place where—gay and lesbian and transgender kids come from a minority where, unlike most other minorities, when they go home at the end of the day, they're not going home. If a child is black, they often go home to black parents—not all the time. If they're Chinese, they go home to Chinese parents. If a child is trans or gay or lesbian, they go home often to the most dangerous place in their life. Most of the kids I worked with on the streets that were trans kids and gay and lesbian kids were there because their parents weren't a source of love; their parents were a source of violence and harm and, often, a source of physical or sexual abuse. I would say that was 80% of the kids that I worked with on the streets, and I would say that 80% of them were gay or lesbian or trans kids. I don't think there's a worse moment of my life that I've ever experienced than just seeing the light go out, where that child no longer sees a future. They don't see a family. They don't see a loving relationship. They don't see parents. They don't see children. They don't see love. They don't see a career. They don't see hope. They think

that the world is a place in which they are entirely alone and in which they cannot construct a future. This is why the suicide rate amongst trans youth and amongst trans, gay and lesbian folks is three, four times higher than it is for other folks, which is why this act and last week's legislation and the power of using words like "gay" and "trans" and "lesbian" and other words and calling things for what they are—and what we learned from the feminist movement in my lifetime is that you have the right to define yourself, not to be defined by others—is so important: because we want not just to see the light of hope in children's eyes; we want to hold our children up and celebrate them for their diversity and their uniqueness and make them feel respected and celebrated. What we want for all of the children in our lives—our own children, our grandchildren, our friends' children—is we want them to live celebrated, accomplished lives where they have high self-esteem and an extraordinarily good feeling about who they are.

e.e. cummings said, "To be nobody-but-yourself—in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you like everybody else—means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight; and never stop fighting." I think that pretty much sums up the journey of anyone who chooses a different path.

It's also, I think, important what we do with this piece of legislation now. I think for us as community leaders, we need to be inspired by our many friends from the trans community who are here today, for whom the great credit for this legislation is really deservedly placed. The reason we have gay and lesbian and trans rights, as I've said many times, is not often because of Legislatures. What has been so remarkable over the last two weeks is, this is the first time in my 40 years of activism where Legislatures are leading, not following, the courts in decisions. We are not doing this under the duress of a Supreme Court ruling that is forcing us to change our laws, as happened with marriage, as happened with gay and lesbian rights in the Human Rights Code. And remember that all of the rights that we have as gay and lesbian and transgender people and sexual minorities in this country, we fought for, and we started that fight, for many of us, at very young ages, saying "I" and "we" rather than "they" and "them."

There are still too many gay, lesbian and transgender people in powerful positions in our society who can't come out yet and say "I" and "we" and "they" and "them." We need our role models. There's a responsibility that all of us who are in safe and powerful places in the world have to self-identify. It was a lot harder for me to say "I" and "we" as a gay and lesbian person when I was 14 or 15, and my father decided to not talk to me for three years because of that. I nearly lost my family. That was courage. It's not courage as a cabinet minister to do that. I am in a safe and powerful place I never thought I would be in, and it is my responsibility to make sure that other folks who are not in safe or powerful places have access to the same fundamental rights that we have.

I go out every day and talk about this. Every Friday, I go to one of the various mosques in my community, and I pray with my Muslim brothers and sisters, with the great support of my friend Yasir Naqvi, whom I'm a great fan of. We call it the gay-Muslim alliance that he and I have. I talk to the imams.

I hope that all of us will not shy away from this. The more you are perceived to be a socially conservative person in this House, the more powerful a voice you are for change. Go to your Knights of Columbus; go to your mosque. Explain to people why you voted for this. Do not run from it. Do not hide from it. Do not say, "We just did it on a voice vote." Do not say, "Well, I was forced to by my party." If you really believe in human rights, all of us, especially those of us who are not gay and lesbian or trans, need to stand up in our communities and be proud and understand the positive consequence of this will only happen if this law changes attitudes. This law will only change attitudes if we start our work today with the same non-partisan spirit that brought this bill forward, of putting kids first and deciding that we were going to be Ontarians before we were Liberals or New Democrats or Conservatives, and going out every day and working this.

We know that when we put gay and lesbian rights and sexual orientation in the human rights charter, the world changed—not because it was a dead law left on the books. It was because it started to affect the way people talked. It started to change our rights to be able to be visible, to not have to hide, to be parents and, because people felt that they had the support of the courts and the law, to act with personal courage in changing the way that they worked.

I want to thank my friend the member for Parkdale—High Park. I think it's been mentioned a number of times: One of the major reasons this bill is before us is not just because of her unrelenting work on this but also because she reached out to others, and she played a very catalytic role in this. As my mother always says to me, "If you don't worry about who gets the credit in life, Glen, you'll get a lot more done." I think that was important. I want to thank my friend Yasir and the member for Oshawa—Whitby, Christine. It's so nice that all the people—these are all straight people; a nice, straight woman from the suburbs, you know? She could probably be in one of those Loblaws commercials, behind the shopping cart with the kids, you know? She's a very deceptively agile politician. It's interesting to see two women and a man who do not come from this community play such a pivotal role. I want to thank all three of them. I'm very proud. I'm a little prouder to be an MPP when I get to keep the company of folks like you.

I also want to thank my friends Chris Bentley and John Gerretsen, the past and current Attorneys General, who are in some ways some of the unsung heroes of this. This stuff in government has to go through ministers' files—and advocate for that. It is important that they played a role, sometimes quietly and silently, where their own strong feelings about this sometimes had to be muted, as we do as ministers from time to time, and were

patient. It's never a virtue I've held in high esteem or been able to operate very effectively with, but others do. I want to thank John and Chris for their leadership as well, and Laurel Broten and Eric and so many others in my caucus—Madeleine—who were just very principled, decent people about this, who worked extra hard in quiet ways and gave this an extra nudge when it was needed.

Most of all, I just want to thank all of you who came down here today. You've been activists every time you get up in the morning and put on pants, or nylons—and God knows how you put on nylons. I did it once; I never want to do it again. I'll tell you that story when there are less media around. It takes a great deal of courage to be you and to be you proudly, and it's because of the "I's" and "we's" that you've been saying in the face of violence and hatred, with great personal courage and dignity, that we're here today.

Thank you so much. God bless and keep you all safe. This is a great day to celebrate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

0930

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my pleasure to rise in the House to speak once again to Bill 33, Toby's Act. I would like to offer thanks once more to the members from Whitby—Oshawa, Parkdale—High Park and Ottawa Centre for coming together to bring this legislation forward.

Not two months ago we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the signing of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, under which every individual is equal before and under the law and under which every individual has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination. These are the dreams we have for our Ontario, our Canada, but we must constantly work to make those dreams real. If we want all Ontarians to enjoy these fundamental rights and freedoms, they should—must—be extended to all Ontarians. Standing in opposition to that notion only serves to reinforce an imbalance; some might go so far as to say "an injustice."

Under the current language of the Ontario Human Rights Code, the equalities and freedoms which most of us enjoy and which far too many of us take for granted are fuzzy, spelled out clearly for some and merely implied for others. Bill 33 looks to change that. It amends the Human Rights Code to specify that every person has a right to equal treatment without discrimination because of gender identity or gender expression.

There was widespread agreement in legal circles that transgender and transsexual persons are implicitly protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code. But if these protection measures are implicitly covered, as some would argue, then there can be no harm in making them explicit. The Human Rights Code was crafted with the express intent of protecting marginalized individuals and disadvantaged groups from discrimination arising from the very characteristics that define these groups. Trans and gender-variant Ontarians represent just such a disadvantaged group. These identities are a reality not

just of modern life but of the human experience. Trans Ontarians come from cultural, ethnoracial and religious backgrounds of all kinds. They live in every part of this vast, proud province. They work in every sector of the economy, and they lead rich lives as children and siblings, parents and grandparents. Trans Ontarians are like us in every way that truly matters. They are strengthened by family, united by community, inspired by hope, restored by faith. They love and are loved. They are not less than us; they are part of us. Yet trans people are not like you or I in one significant way: They are not regarded as being equal under the law.

You can't work in this place and not cultivate some kind of social conscience. In the work we do, we constantly see wrongs that cry out for our attention. We are reminded daily that the world is imperfect and that there are people who need our help. We raise our voices here in service of our communities and in support of what we believe to be right. We do answer for our work here in this place. We answer to our constituents and we answer to history. May it be said of us here today that we were able to recognize an imbalance that we admitted could no longer be denied. Equality must live as more than just a theory if it is to live at all. And may it be said that we took this moment to rise to our best ideas, that we valued our rights and freedoms enough that we extended them to all Ontarians. Call it the golden rule if you like; call it moral courage if you must. When you get right down to it, this is a decision about whether or not to deny our fellow Ontarians the full scope of freedoms, rights and protections that others enjoy as a birthright. It is a chance to affirm that human equality is a fundamental right, not a privilege to be enjoyed by the fortunate.

Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a great pleasure to stand before my colleagues today and speak in support of this Bill 33, Toby's Act. This is the fourth time the member from Parkdale—High Park has introduced this bill, but, as others have mentioned, it's the first time it has been sponsored by all three parties. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the member from Parkdale—High Park, the member from Ottawa Centre and our own member from Whitby—Oshawa for bringing this forward and spearheading this initiative that stands up for the rights of all Ontarians.

It's unfortunate that even in this age we're still having this debate about whose human rights should be protected in our community when the answer should be that everyone's human rights deserve equal protection under the law in this province.

It's equally unfortunate that even in this age, society still needs to address discrimination and prejudice at all. We should be past this as a society. We should just be past it.

It's the respect for diversity that makes Canadians stand apart from other countries. I've lived in a couple of other countries, and I can tell you we are lucky as Can-

adians and Ontarians to live where we do. It is the fabric of our communities, this diversity, that makes us Canadians and makes us special. Why can't we just expand that and make that—you know, that's a place I want my kids to grow up in. I have two young children, and I want them to grow up tolerant and understanding of people who are different from them, not afraid of them because they look a little bit different or they think a little bit differently. It doesn't matter. What matters is that they have a heart and a soul just like the rest of us, and that's what we need to focus on.

If respecting diversity is one of our core values—and I think that it is—then we should make sure that it's embodied in the wording of our laws. This is exactly what we are trying to do here: We're explicitly stating that everyone's human rights are protected equally under the law in Ontario.

Bill 33 is named for Toby Dancer. Many of us know her as Adrian Chornowol. She was a transgendered person and a musical genius. Since the provincial Conservative Party government, led by Premier John Robarts, enacted the Human Rights Code in 1961, our province has made leaps and bounds in recognizing and protecting the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups. However, Ms. Toby Dancer's tragedy is a reminder for all of us that there is still much more we can do in terms of combatting discrimination and treating each other with respect and dignity, no matter what your walk of life is, no matter what religion you are, no matter what sexual orientation you are. That is not what defines us.

If my memory serves, this bill was last introduced in 2010, and then the Attorney General rejected the bill on the basis that transgendered people's rights were already protected under the code. I'd like to argue that this view missed the point of the bill, I think. The purpose of Toby's Act is to explicitly state that transgendered people are entitled to the same human rights protection offered to all Ontarians. Are they not? Like I said, we all have a heart and soul and we have that in common. We all deserve the same protections.

Why do we want to make this explicit statement? Scholars from academic institutions around the world have produced empirical data and theoretical basis supporting the position that values embodied in laws can promote greater awareness and encourage good behaviour, even if the laws are rarely enforced. By explicitly stating that all and every Ontarian is entitled to the same human rights protection, we can reduce the amount of hidden discrimination facing transgendered people and—you know what?—frankly, everybody else, too, because we need a society where there is no tipping point anymore, that we go over that tipping point and we're at a point where it doesn't matter that we're different.

Once again, I'd like to congratulate my colleagues from Parkdale–High Park, Ottawa Centre and Whitby–Oshawa for bringing attention to this important issue. I'm pleased that the bill has gone through committee and was called for third reading. It has been a long time and a

long, hard battle for the member from Parkdale–High Park and for everyone sitting in the gallery as well. It's one that was hard-fought, and I'm afraid to say that this isn't the end. It's probably just the beginning for everybody, but it's a great start.

It's my sincerest hope that my colleagues in the House would kindly lend their support to this bill. It should be everyone's personal opinion, I think, that everyone's rights are detailed and protected under the law. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Wow. Can you believe this is happening? It's astounding. It's astounding for a variety of reasons, but it's particularly astounding in a kind of slightly humorous way, because Toby, were Toby alive today, was a very private person and would be completely embarrassed by all of this.

I want to start by introducing some incredibly important people, and those are the people who are sitting in our gallery. We have Douglas Elliott from the Ontario GSA Coalition. We know Doug. We have the Rev. Dr. Brent Hawkes—

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Actually, why don't you save your applause till the end, because there are a lot of them.

We have Rev. Dr. Brent Hawkes; Boris Dittrich; Andrea Houston; Kevin Beaulieu, Luka Sidaravicius—these are Pride people—another, Luka Amona, Francisco Alvarez, Evan Dean, all from Pride; Richard Hudler from Queer Ontario; Lynn Anne Mulrooney from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, senior policy analyst; Bahar Karbalaei—I'm going to massacre these names—again from the RNAO; Susan Gapka, famous Susan, the chair of Trans Lobby Group; Davina Hader, from Trans Lobby Group; Christin Milloy, from Trans Lobby Group; Martine Stonehouse, the famous Martine, from Trans Lobby Group; Nick Mule, also from Trans Lobby Group; Shannon Hogan and Pamela Bond, who were responsible for putting the stained glass window of Toby Dancer in our church, are here—two good friends; Alex Moakler; Stefanknee Wolscht; Rachel Lewis; Jonathan Mackereth; Dwayne Shaw; Amanda Ryan; Stephanie Williams; my own staff, Susan Rogers, Gerard Di Trolio, Ramesh Rajandram—thanks, staff, for all your work—and also Butila Carpacci, my EA, who's not here; Emily McDonald and Debbie Wooldridge.

If I left anybody out, we love you too, whoever you are, so thank you.

0940

I can still remember Toby's playing. Every Sunday night, Toby played Amazing Grace. She was our music director at the church. The reason that Toby played Amazing Grace every Sunday night—although she hated playing it after a while, as you can imagine—was that the evening service was and is made up of people mainly on social assistance, people who are marginalized because of mental health and addiction issues. Many of them

didn't have glasses that worked, back in the day when Toby played, and many others had literacy issues. It didn't even work to do overheads for them. So Toby had to play *Amazing Grace*, because everybody knows the words—at least, to the first verse—of *Amazing Grace*.

What Toby would have preferred to have played was jazz. Toby was a John Coltrane fan. She was a phenomenal producer of Ian Tyson albums, as was mentioned, and a great studio musician. I remember that one service we did, which we called John Squared, was the gospel of John and the music of John Coltrane. I think it had an audience of about four people, but that's okay. We had a good time.

A few facts about not only Toby but about all trans folk that I think are really important to hold, that haven't been mentioned yet: 48% of trans people attempt suicide. That is the highest suicide rate of any marginalized group you can imagine or mention. About the same number live in poverty, and Toby represented both those groups: attempted suicide and living in poverty.

Once Toby began to transition, Toby's life went downhill. Certainly, we saw from deputations that not only in employment but in trying to find a place to live, in all of those markers of prejudice, trans folk are the ones who suffer most, out of all of the marginalized groups. What we are doing here today, ladies and gentlemen, is the first step towards saving lives. That's what we're doing. We're making that first step towards saving the lives of those who are deeply, deeply discriminated against, and that's why today is so significant.

Toby was doing really well, we thought, as well as could be expected, considering the facts that I've just given you and the fact that she herself found it extremely difficult just to walk down the street. I hold that image up, Madam Speaker: just to walk down the street.

We had another wonderful trans person who came through our congregation who was the first ordained trans person in the United Church of Canada: Cindy Bourgeois. Love to Cindy—she's out there in Stratford, doing her church work. Cindy is six foot four. She didn't pass very well; looked more male than female; constantly walked down the street to verbal abuse. Imagine walking out your door every day to verbal abuse. Cindy used to joke—she's six foot four—"Come on. Come and get me," right? But still, that's hard. That's difficult.

Jurisdictionally, this will be the first major jurisdiction in all of North America, not just Canada, to pass this gender identity and gender expression into its human rights code. That is significant. The Northwest Territories has been mentioned. Not to say anything negative about our Northwest Territories brothers and sisters, but there are only about 40,000 people who live there. We have 13 million in Ontario. This is huge. This is a huge, historic step forward for human rights, for all people, because when you stand up for the human rights of a minority of people, you're standing up for the human rights of all people, and that's what we're doing here today.

I've had calls from New York state, from North Carolina. This will have an impact beyond the borders of Canada.

I was in Winnipeg, the mayoral town of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, just about a week ago, speaking to the attorney general there—and they're copying us, by the way, on the record. They're going to be bringing in gender identity themselves this week at some point. But we still beat them—yay! It was a friendly competition, I said, in which we all win.

Certainly, federally—here's where I want to say, first of all, hats off to the member from Whitby-Oshawa. I have to say that if Toby were alive to hear Progressive Conservatives talk in glowing terms about her, she would have been verklempt. Thank you all, to the Progressive Conservative Party, who really showed your progressive conservative side today. Thank you for being progressive. And thank you for speaking to your husband. Thank you for speaking to the Minister of Finance, who voted in favour of this bill federally.

How amazing, that we live in a country where this bill can go to committee, and I'm sure it will eventually work its way out and be passed federally as well. But again, just to be a little competitive here, I have to say that when we pass it here today, it will cover the rights of more people than the federal bill will, still. The federal bill is a lot more constrained in terms of the numbers of people it covers, so again we're making history for all of Canada here in terms of just the numbers of people that this bill will affect.

You ask, "Well, what will it affect?" I can think of a number of ways. One of the struggles for trans people is around identification. We heard lots of testimony about identification issues. This will help them get an OHIP card, get a driver's licence. It will help them there. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for psychiatrists: This could open up a challenge to that. There are all sorts of ways in which this bill could begin to change the scenario for trans people in the way that trans folk are viewed and the experience that trans folk have.

I mean, just for a moment, can you actually imagine a child—for those with young children who are listening, and those with young children in the chamber, one of them, statistically, may be trans. Imagine the different world that that child will grow up in because of this bill and all that it entails and all that it will unleash in terms of the way we go about our lives in Ontario: who we hire, how easy it is to get hired; who we rent to, how easy it is to get rent; quality of life, income levels, education. Every aspect of one's existence will be affected by this bill, potentially. That, too, is phenomenally historic.

Really, what we're doing is simply one thing, and that is to recognize that trans folk are human beings like the rest of us.

I also want to give a shout-out to the member from Ottawa Centre, to Yasir, and to thank you so, so much for carrying this forward on your side. That's the other aspect of this bill that's quite wonderful. This bill shows how minority government can work. You'll witness in about 40 minutes that we'll all start yelling at each other again, but for this halcyon moment, that's not the case. For this halcyon moment, we're actually all working

together, with a common theme, to a common end, and that's something that really overrides just about everything else, and that's human rights itself, civil rights, which I'm sure inspires all of us to have even run to be here in this chamber. Showing that minority government can work is critical, and I think that's what we were all elected to do. We were elected to a minority government to show that it can work. This is what it looks like when it works at its very best.

Shout-outs, too, to the Attorney General, who's here, and the past Attorney General, who's here as well. Thank you for your offices and for your staff, and thank you for becoming part of the solution and not part of the problem, which is amazing. I know, again, that this will open up all sorts of things, Mr. Attorney General, in your department as well. It's great that we're voting together on this so that that will roll out seamlessly—also good.

0950

What else to say? I want to thank a few people. I want to thank the people from Emmanuel Howard Park United Church. I'm not part of that church anymore. When you leave the pulpit, you leave the church. But it was a phenomenal moment in history, a phenomenal group of people who actually allowed the church to be transformed, wrote a book about it, won a prize about it, but it really was the people in the church who allowed that to happen, who allowed a church to become inclusive and grow because of its inclusion. We have a great member here, the Rev. Dr. Brent Hawkes, who showed how one can do that in church: grow a church based on inclusion.

This is true, by the way, not just of Christians but of all faiths. I've had letters from some wonderful people of faith, including in the Jewish faith, supporting Toby's bill. Again, that shows that all faiths can be open; all faiths can be inclusive.

I want to give a shout-out, too, to members here from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association—Cheryl Fullerton, I see up there. Her name wasn't mentioned. Again, talking about people of faith: a union of Catholic teachers who voted 90% in favour of gay-straight alliances and are also here in support of Toby's bill. The times they are a-changing, no doubt, but true people of faith, people who walk in faith, walk there because they're called to love their neighbours as themselves, no matter what the faith is that they represent. Truly, trans folk are our neighbours, and we're doing the work of faith here, not only the historic work but the work of faith here.

I got a letter from a young trans person that was both tragic and beautiful. I'm going to paraphrase it and not read it. What she talked about in the letter was how she grew up constantly bullied, ostracized by her family, kicked out of the house at 14, lived on the streets, ended up in sex trade work and drug abuse, found her fleeting way back—this is not an atypical story, unfortunately. She found her fleeting way back to a group of caring adults, finally got her feet on the floor, got a job—a minimum wage job—was putting her life back together one piece at a time, and talked about the trials and

tribulations and the horrors of her day. Again, she talked about that searing moment that I described in the life of many trans folk, of just walking out the door into abuse every day on the streets of our cities. She said, "If this bill—Toby's bill—passes, this will give me hope." To extend hope to those who are hopeless is also the job of all of us here as legislators, and that's what we're doing.

Toby, we thought, was doing well, as I say, but, it turns out, wasn't doing so well: had been clean and sober for many, many years and fell off that wagon and died of an overdose. We're not even sure how or why. I want to send condolences and regards to the other organization in Toby's life, which is Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre—a phenomenal organization on Queen Street that feeds 150 people a day; phenomenal social workers who work out of there. Toby was also their music director and led a band there as well, and originally walked into that place to get food—just like she walked into Emmanuel Howard Park, because we had a dinner on Sunday nights. It slowly rolled out from there.

Again, Toby's life was abusive. Her sister also was trans and also died of suicide—a phenomenally musical family; phenomenal success stories. As she transitioned and as her sister transitioned—Starr was her name—it became tragic very quickly. When Toby died, friends of Toby's dressed her before she was placed in the coffin. Toby usually just wore jeans and T-shirts—that kind of gal—but for her funeral, she was dressed in a mini skirt, high heels, a beautiful blouse and full makeup. We hadn't seen Toby as her true self until that moment—profoundly sad and yet profoundly glad at the same time. I know Toby is listening to this and I know Toby is watching.

After that, we put up a stained glass window—I've told this story before in this chamber. We thought we were the only church with a stained glass window of a trans person anywhere in the universe. It was a picture of Toby playing the piano, put up there and donated by Shannon and Pam, whom I introduced earlier. When I said that at the funeral, somebody yelled out, "Yeah, but what about Joan of Arc?", which makes you think of historical trans folk as well. Who knows?

Toby would be embarrassed, shy; probably would not have shown up to this debate if she were alive. But certainly what we're doing here today is to memorialize not only Toby Dancer—and I can't tell you how wonderful it is to have Conservative research do research on Toby Dancer; that's just amazing; it would be amazing—but every other trans person who has died in an untimely fashion. We're memorializing them all. We're giving them a fitting funeral. Not only that; we're providing them with a resurrection story, and that is that from now on, that doesn't have to happen. We will not only pass this bill but we will absolutely commit ourselves to our children and the children of the future that that story is never, ever repeated in quite that way.

We will be at the threshold of a new Ontario, a new Canada, because they're all following suit after us, and actually a new North America, because I know it's going to change south of the border as well, state by state by

state. We're the first. I herald that. Despite the Northwest Territories—as I say, there are only 40,000 people there. We're the first. I'm proud, so proud, to be an Ontarian and so proud to be a Canadian and so proud to be part of an assembly where we're all on the same page about this.

I think back to what I started with: Toby Dancer playing *Amazing Grace*. To that poor, young trans person who wrote me that letter: It's not a hope we're talking about here; it is grace, and it is amazing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: In some ways, I regret taking the last two minutes, because there are members in this House who deserve absolute credit for making this come here today. But I'm happy to stand and speak to an issue like this in this House, because I think it does speak to the best parts about this province and this country and what people can do.

Sometimes I worry that things don't change, and they certainly don't change fast enough, but it's clear that things do change, that things can change, and I think the ingredients for change are present here today.

Most important in changing things is community activism and bravery, and that's what we see from the folks in the gallery. I think we all, across this province, across the country, owe a huge debt of gratitude to folks here, to activists.

In addition to that, it tells me, it tells my friends, it tells my community that this place also matters and that we do need people to step up and represent people in a way that matters. It speaks to the best parts of the traditions of the parties here today. The true meaning of liberal is reflected here, the true meaning of progressive in the Progressive Conservative Party, and the true meaning of democracy in the NDP. I think we should all be proud of that and remember that more often in this House.

I'll just close with thanks to everyone present by expressing my own gratitude for bringing some hope to me personally, to my community. I just say thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, May 31, 2012, I am required to put the question.

Ms. DiNovo has moved third reading of Bill 33, An act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to gender identity and gender expression. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried on division.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: No further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further business, I declare this House recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1000 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature Ernie and Janine Petrasovic from Aurora. Welcome.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'd love to introduce today a second-year student from Queen's University, studying political science; she wants to be a politician: Tanya Irwin. Tanya, welcome.

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I would like to introduce a dear friend of mine who's here for the passing of Bill 33: from Hamilton, Debbie Wooldridge.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: It is with great pleasure that I'm pleased to introduce in the Legislature a very well-known singer and a writer: Satinder Sartaaj. I had the opportunity to attend his live concert last Sunday, where he performed continuously for three and a half hours. Sartaaj has made a name for himself around the globe in the Punjabi community, but he gained his prominence right here in Toronto, so I want to extend him a very, very warm welcome.

He is accompanied today by—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'd like to introduce two very dear friends, Shannon Hogan and Pam Bond—oh, sorry. I thought you were finished, Minister; sorry. He recognized me, so I just jumped in. You know what? I'll do it, then you go after. How about that? It's all good.

I just want to invite everyone to a reception—it's going to be in room 230—for the passage of Toby's Law, which happened this morning. So, room 230, noon and on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the Minister of Government Services. I thought he was finished.

The Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, he actually is accompanied by two very well-known Punjabi media personalities. I want to introduce Iqbal Mahal, who is actually a promoter for Satinder, and also Kuldip Deepak, a good friend. These are really the two founders of Punjabi media in the Toronto area. I'm very pleased to welcome you today.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Joining us in the gallery very shortly is Mr. Boris Dittrich, who was a former member of Parliament from the Netherlands, who has come a long way to join us. He was the first openly gay member of the Dutch Parliament. He is with an international human rights organization based out of New York, and he's here to observe the passage of Toby's Law today.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Sitting in the east members' gallery is Jacob Hong, who's working at Queen's Park this summer and is a student from Queen's University.

Also joining us today is somebody who has put up with me for the last 17 years here at Queen's Park. Mary Yoannidis is here. She has always tried to make me look good, and she's here today. She's joined by Judy Bell, who for many years worked with Gerry Phillips.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today I would like to welcome to the Ontario Legislature one of my intern students, Mr. Zaya Kuyena. Welcome.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Do we have any more introductions of visitors? The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to take this opportunity to thank someone who has given her time and talents to making this House run so smoothly. Many of you know that Carol Price is retiring from the government House leader's office to spend more time with her husband, John.

This is not the first time she has tried to escape the clutches of Queen's Park. She left us once before, but we lured her back on a short-term contract. That was indeed eight years ago.

Since then, Carol has worked closely with all our government whips and helped us to navigate the complexities of the House and committees with consummate skill, poise and professionalism.

I hope you will all join me in wishing Carol all the best as she resumes her life beyond this place and in thanking her for all her good work and service.

Mr. Speaker, as a former Boy Scout, you're always told not to lie. People should recognize who the real chief government whip is for this government.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Speaker: I just want it noted for Carol that this side stood up too. Congratulations, my friend.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for oral questions, I need to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Miller, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, assumes ballot item number 59, and Mr. Tabuns assumes ballot item number 66.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: Rather than getting answers or getting closer to answers regarding the scandal at Ornge, through our public hearings we actually are getting more questions. Witnesses are coming forward and they are giving conflicting answers under oath. Ministry officials are evasive in their

responses. The minister continues to defend a dysfunctional organization that continues to put patients at risk.

Now the deputy minister joins in on the obstruction of the work of the committee. This letter was sent to committee members last evening, and it is in response to very specific information that we have requested pursuant to standing order 110(b). I'd like to know: Does the minister know what her deputy has said in this letter, and does she support it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I think that we should allow the committee to do its work. Not counting this morning and Mr. Fred Rusk, who appeared in front of Ornge, the public accounts committee has sat for 40 hours; 38 witnesses have come forward.

We've learned a lot. We've learned about the dying days of the Harris-Eves government, that the PC Minister of Health, Tony Clement, paid tens of thousands of dollars to prominent Conservatives Lynne Golding, Guy Giorno and Kevin McCarthy to set up Chris Mazza's corporate structure for him. We've found out that Lynne Golding and Guy Giorno, two of the most prominent Conservatives in Ontario, were the ones who in fact advised Dr. Mazza on how he could hide his salary.

We learned about Kelly Mitchell and the thousands of dollars that he was paid to schmooze members of the opposition, including the member who just asked the question.

We heard about the Oshawa airport, and the fact of the matter was that although Ornge said—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question.

Mr. Frank Klees: Once again, it's apparent that the minister doesn't know what her deputy minister is doing and she asked the House leader to answer her questions.

Under standing order 110(b), the committee has requested very straightforward information. One of those requests was that we receive information regarding a proposal that Ornge made to the government in January 2011. The deputy minister's response is as follows: "We wish to clarify that the responsive documents are subject to solicitor-client privilege." No information.

I'd like to know from the Minister of Health: Who is the solicitor, who is the client, who is she representing, and why are they hiding this information from the committee?

1040

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: I know that the honourable member would want to make sure that all members of the Legislature know the overall request that was given, and that was for investigation reports.

I think members of this Legislature understand that an investigation report, by its very nature—all one has to do is cross-reference it with media reports—in fact could contain very, very sensitive personal health information.

What the deputy minister has said is that he wants to work with the committee in a way to make sure that that information comes forward without personal health information being jeopardized.

We are not on some crazy fishing expedition across the way, and I think the honourable member should be respecting the privacy of Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: You're absolutely right. Speaker, the House leader is absolutely right. They are not on a fishing expedition; they are on a cover-up expedition. That's what they're doing.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Mr. Frank Klees: If the Minister of Health is going to have the House leader answer her questions, he should at least get it right. The issue that he's referring to—

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes. Because of the response of the House, I have to ask the member to withdraw that unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Frank Klees: Glad to respond, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pardon?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'll withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Continue.

Mr. Frank Klees: But it doesn't change the fact that they are hiding information—information that legitimately the committee has asked for. The House leader has not answered my question. It is not the motion that I was speaking to. The motion that I was speaking to has nothing to do with investigations. Will the House leader get it right? We are asking for background information: all correspondence relating to a proposal made regarding Ornge in January 2011.

Why is that being hidden under this guise of solicitor-client privilege? I'd like to know—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, I think that all of us recognize that the place to have these discussions is within the committee, not within the 30 or 40 seconds within question period.

The simple fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker—and the member knows this, as an experienced parliamentarian—there are rules around protecting personal information. There are rules around solicitor-client privilege, and there are ways for ministries to work out with committee to make sure that that information is put forward.

To stand up here today like a cross between Perry Mason and Atticus Finch and try to pretend that we are doing nothing more than following the usual rules and procedures is a disservice to the committee and a

disservice to the fine public servants at the Ministry of Health who are trying to co-operate in a way that protects the rights of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): New question?

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: The last thing this government is trying to do is co-operate. What we're trying to do in that committee is to in fact do our work, and we are not asking for anything that has never been asked for before—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Who is the question to?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'll ask the question back to the Minister of Health and see if she might answer this time.

I'd like to know from the Minister of Health: Will she look at this letter? Will she tell the House whether she agrees with the way that her deputy is hiding information from our committee? Why will the minister not get on our side, the side of the people who want to find out what went wrong, who was responsible? The only way we'll ever do that is if we get the information that's buried deep in the Ministry of Health that they're now covering up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Two minutes ago, I asked you to withdraw that unparliamentary remark. I need to ask you to do it again.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'll withdraw the word "cover-up."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You have to withdraw—

Mr. Frank Klees: I will withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Speaker, saying it louder and saying it with that Hollywood drama doesn't make it correct.

The simple fact is that the committee has asked the Ministry of Health for information. What the ministry has said is that it wishes to work with the committee, to furnish that information to the committee in a way that protects private information and complies with parliamentary tradition and parliamentary and legal conventions. That is all that has happened here.

This is a matter that should be dealt with by the committee. This has been going on for years in this place. The committee has got access to information which, because of the nature of it, there has to be negotiations between the two parties to ensure that everyone is protected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Supplementary? The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Minister of Health: I hope she decides to answer this question. Residents in the city of Ottawa are very concerned with the government's weak response on the Ornge ambulance scandal, a scandal that has put patients' safety and lives at risk.

While the members from Ottawa–Vanier, Ottawa West–Nepean, Ottawa Centre, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Ottawa South and Ottawa–Orléans want to sit by and watch you dance in this House, the PC caucus and the front-line staff at Ornge will not let you evade questions. We'll continue to press this government.

We want to know, in Ottawa: Will the minister tell this House why air ambulances at Ornge's Ottawa base were unavailable for 7,621 minutes this past year? That's 121 hours. If she can't tell this House why, she has to resign.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Be seated, please.

Minister.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, the best-actor awards are coming out, because this drama does not make it right. A question that I would like to ask the honourable member, the question that I would like to ask all members of the Progressive Conservative caucus, is: Why will they not support Bill 50? It is the last piece of the puzzle, to ensure that the problems at Ornge, the challenges at Ornge, which have been identified by the Auditor General, will be addressed.

I think that it is outrageous that she stands here today, as I say, putting on her best Oscar performance, and then will not—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Final supplementary. The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Since the Minister of Finance won't ask this question, I will. This morning, Speaker, we learned that the Windsor Regional Hospital wants out of the Ornge air ambulance service. This is a scathing indictment of your so-called new leadership.

But don't take my word for it, Mr. Speaker. Listen to the words of Lesley Froome, the aunt of the young girl who died because of the minister's incompetence. She says, "I want everyone held responsible ... I want everybody held responsible. I want everybody to know what they've done. It's about our children's lives. It's about Jamie's life, that was wasted by all of these people."

You know, Speaker, Lesley Froome was right. It's about a life that was wasted because of this minister's incompetence. Don't you dare quote any statistics to me, Minister. This is about a six-year-old little girl. Now a major regional hospital in my backyard wants nothing to do with you and nothing to do with Ornge air ambulance.

Mr. Speaker, this minister simply needs to do the right thing and resign.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Be seated, please.

Minister.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm going to echo the words back: Don't you dare stand up with a drive-by smear like that. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has done an outstanding job—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the official opposition to come to order. The clock is ticking.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Nepean–Carleton, come to order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Simcoe North, come to order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Minister of Economic Development and Trade, come to order. Minister.

Hon. John Milloy: The Minister of Health has done an outstanding job in addressing the challenges at Ornge. How dare that member stand up and turn a personal tragedy into some sort of political gamesmanship on the floor of the House? The member should be ashamed of himself, and he should stand in his place and he should apologize to the Minister of Health and to this Legislative Assembly and to the family of that young girl.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. I recognize the leader of the New Democratic Party.

1050

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The government has repeatedly promised residents of Ontario's nursing homes a revolution in long-term care. Can he tell us if all nursing homes in this province are being inspected annually?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I am extraordinarily proud of the changes that are happening in our long-term-care homes thanks to the superb work of one Monique Smith who, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, undertook a very thorough review of long-term-care homes, which culminated in the passage of the Long-Term Care Act. Inspections have changed dramatically since that time.

To answer the question: Yes, every year at a minimum, every home is visited by an inspector. We are transforming that inspection process, and the great beneficiaries are the residents of long-term-care homes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I beg to differ. The fact is that the government has abandoned annual inspections, one of the many promises to Ontario's elderly and their families that they are breaking. This is a promise that the government is breaking to those people. The government maintains that health care is a priority, but every day Ontarians hear about new cutbacks in health care.

Experts now say that the Liberal government is breaking its own laws to protect seniors in home care and in long-term care. Why has the Premier abandoned On-

tario's most vulnerable seniors by breaking the promise that he made and legislated?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm happy to speak more about the inspection of our long-term-care homes. What I can tell you is that we have zero tolerance for abuse and neglect. We have very big expectations of people who work in long-term-care homes to care for our parents and for our grandparents. The inspections are now unannounced; they vary in complexity; some require more time than others to complete.

I can tell you that in 2003 there were 59 inspectors. We now have 81 inspectors working in long-term-care homes; seven new inspectors were added just recently. In 2011, 2,430 inspections were completed in our 630 long-term-care homes.

I can tell you, Speaker, the other big improvement is that we have a hotline for people to call. We encourage staff members, family members and residents to contact immediately if they suspect abuse or neglect in our long-term-care homes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Inspectors are saying that it's going to take them five years to respond to some of the complaints that are coming in, because they simply don't have the resources to do the inspections. The government has made a pretty basic commitment to the people of this province, but it's a very important commitment. Our health care system is supposed to be a priority, yet seniors in long-term care and their families are learning once again that they are certainly not a priority.

When will the government commit to upholding their own legislation? Are they going to uphold their own legislation and begin to have annual inspections of every long-term-care centre in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, that work is under way. As I have said, there is an inspector visiting every long-term-care home in this province at least once a year. When you hear that we did 2,430 inspections last year in 630 homes, you can do the math. On average, it would be close to four visits per home, per year.

We do respond based on the particular conditions. If there's a serious allegation, we get there very, very quickly. We also do very intensive inspections that take 10 days. They start with talking to the residents, talking to family members, and that's a very thorough investigation. So there's a significant variation, but 2,430 inspections were completed last year.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier, but really, I can't believe the minister who says, "Trust me. Believe me." There's not much trust on this side of the House. What's happening to seniors in long-term care is really concerning to families—that's the point—families who want health care to be a priority.

Despite all of the promises, the front-line care that they rely on doesn't seem to be a priority when they need it.

The government now says that they're planning new changes at their local health integration networks. Will they strike the long-promised LHIN review before they make any changes? Will they do that first, Speaker?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The answer to that is yes. We're looking forward to having a good review of the LHINs, but what I can tell you is that we continue to strengthen LHINs. The next step is bringing primary care under the LHINs. We really do believe that the entire health system, including that most important part, primary health care, should be under the umbrella of the LHINs.

We believe, Speaker, that while we've made enormous progress in getting people access to primary care, there's more we need to do. There are parts of the province where it's still hard to get a family doctor. There are still groups of people, sub-populations, who are not getting access to primary care that they need, so we need the LHINs to be part of that planning process to get the primary care where it's needed the most. We also need primary care to be fully integrated with our whole health care system, with our acute care hospitals, with our home care, with our long-term care.

We've got great aspirations to make health care stronger, and LHINs will be an important part of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, here's what people see: promises to make health care a priority, followed by cuts to the services that they rely on, and disturbing scandals like Ornge and eHealth, where well-connected insiders get rich on money that was supposed to provide health care in this province.

If we're going to tackle the challenges in health care, we need to look at the health care system. When is this government going to finally deliver on the long-promised review of the LHINs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have to correct the member opposite. There are no cuts to health care. In fact, this government made a very clear decision. When we were faced with some significant fiscal challenges, our choice—and it was our choice as a government—was to protect health care, to protect education, to protect those core services that the people of Ontario turn to provincial government to provide.

We are increasing spending in health care. We are increasing spending by over 2% this year—not as much as we're used to, but an increase nonetheless. We're being extremely strategic in how we spend that increased funding.

There is no question, Speaker, that what the health care system needs right now is an injection of new resources into the community sector to get people the care they need at home.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, just because the minister says there are no cuts doesn't mean that's what people are experiencing. They are experiencing cuts and reductions in access to health care in this province.

If the government is truly serious about making health care a priority, then they shouldn't be afraid to look honestly at the system. Instead, time and time again, the facts are being hidden from the public. No inspections are being made at long-term-care homes; no oversight in agencies like Ornge; decisions being made behind closed doors. Patients want to know that their concerns are being addressed and they're being heard.

Now the minister is saying she's putting the cart before the horse and she's going to put more responsibilities on LHINs without even doing the review and getting the information that she should have before she gives them more power. When is the government going to deliver on their promise to review the LHINs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I've already said that we will, of course, be doing the review of the LHINs, but we have also got a lot of work under way in the health care system that is—I'm actually enormously excited about the future, and I'm enormously pleased to see so much support in the health care community for the change we want to make.

Our action plan lays out the road map; it's a blueprint for the future of health care. We are absolutely committed to improving community supports—a 4% increase over the next three years, in each of those next three years. In order to do that, we do have to hold hospital funding at a 0% base increase. We're holding physician compensation where it is. We're not going to spend more on doctors, because we must spend more on the community.

We are moving forward with the improvements to health care. We've come so far, working together. The future's very bright.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, it's nice to see that you've finally decided to reply to the Waterloo region's letter about emergency dispatching, after I raised the issue last week in this House. Unfortunately, though, your letter fails to properly address the issue at hand.

1100

Minister, regional chair Ken Seiling wrote to you four months ago asking for your help to implement a local solution to significantly improve EMS response times throughout Waterloo region. Instead of addressing his concerns, you sent him a token letter to tout your ministry's dispatching pilot project, which, Waterloo region EMS director John Prno said, "does nothing for speeding up the ambulance response."

Minister, how can the people of Waterloo region take you seriously when the only solution you can propose doesn't even improve ambulance response times?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, when it comes to land ambulance, I think the member opposite needs to

understand that we have a responsibility across the province, so it is not unusual that ambulances cross those municipal boundaries to get patients to the care they need as quickly as possible. We need a provincial dispatch system. That's what makes our ambulance system strong.

What I can tell you is that I'm very, very pleased that Kitchener-Waterloo is a pilot site for the EMS simultaneous notification, Speaker. We've got four sites where we're testing something that I think is pretty exciting, where both fire and ambulance are notified simultaneously in the event of an emergency call to get care to people faster. We look forward to launching this later this summer at four sites: Kitchener, Mississauga, Barrie and Guelph. We are, as I say, very much looking forward to the results of these—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Minister, that has nothing to do with the letter at hand.

Our local municipalities, police officers, firefighters and paramedics are all willing to work together now to improve emergency response times. The only thing that's standing in the road is you.

Mr. Seiling indicated very clearly in his letter that the region supports former police chief Larry Gravill's recommendation to bring all emergency dispatching centres under one roof, but your letter doesn't even address this recommendation.

Minister, I know meeting with me personally to discuss this issue wasn't a priority. You'd rather send an army of your staffers to obscure this issue. But would you at least have the courtesy to personally meet with regional officials pleading for your help? Yes or no?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's wonderful to feel the spirit of co-operation in this place, Speaker. The member opposite met with members of my staff and got a thorough briefing. He doesn't need to take cheap shots. This is more important than that.

I would be more than happy to meet with Mr. Seiling. I've met with him before and I'd be happy to meet with him again.

What's important is that we move forward in improving response times when it comes to getting care to people who need that emergency response. The simultaneous notification is a great step forward. As I say, it will be rolling out later this summer. We've committed over \$4 million to this project because we believe that it will provide better care for patients.

EMS operators at other sites will also have a real-time view of ambulance locations, allowing them to make more informed decisions about what services are needed and where. Several municipalities already have—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. New question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Tonight, to balance their budgets, boards in Peel and Toronto will be forced to make what one trustee calls a

"bloodbath" of cuts, cuts that will hit special education, social workers, speech therapists, building maintenance, cafeterias, continuing education, safe schools, teacher education and community access to schools. This is in addition to the 800 staff that the Toronto District School Board let go in April.

Is this what the Premier meant when he said he was going to protect education?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm so proud to be part of a government that has made such significant investments in education, Speaker. And despite challenging economic times, I think it's important for Ontarians to recognize that in this year's grants for student needs—those grants will be stable despite challenging economic times. That will preserve a \$6.5-billion or 45% increase to board funding across the province since 2003.

When we talk about the TDSB, our record is even stronger than that: a 34% increase across the board, at the same time as seeing student enrolment go down by 12%. What does that mean? That means that since 2003, the Toronto District School Board has seen an increase in per-pupil funding of over 50%.

We have a strong record when it comes to schools in this province. We continue to roll out all-day kindergarten right across the province, and we will see 323 full-day kindergarten classes in the Toronto District School Board next year. We're proud of our commitment to public education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The minister can cite as many numbers as she wants. The reality is clear: There's a half-billion-dollar reduction in spending on schools. While this minister is citing numbers, Ontario students lose their educational assistants, social workers, psychologists and special education supports, and are denied a fair chance to succeed at school.

The chair of the Peel school board says some of the government's messages have sounded like we've gone back to the Mike Harris era. How can this government claim they're protecting education?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I think it's so critically important to have a conversation with facts. Facts are critically important when we talk about what's happening in our classrooms and right across the schools.

We should all be incredibly proud in Ontario of the education system that we have built. We are recognized around the world as a jurisdiction that is doing well by its students, and we're doing well by our students in Peel as well. In the Peel District School Board, funding is up 81% since we took office. Enrolment is growing in Peel and we acknowledge that, unlike the Toronto District School Board, where enrolment is down. Enrolment is up in Peel, but it's only up by 16%, and our funding is up by 81%.

In addition, across the board, we are rolling out full-day kindergarten. That investment is in addition to the grants for student needs. We will fully roll out all-day

kindergarten, with new classes rolling out each and every year up to 2014, and that is the best investment that we can make in our future.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: My question this morning is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, we all know that the past decade has given way to challenging economic times. My constituents in the riding of Windsor West have been wondering what the government has been doing when it comes to creating more jobs in the province, to see that our families remain strong and our businesses flourish.

We know that keeping large companies in Ontario and attracting new investment will help create more jobs. Speaker, through you, can the minister inform us what our government is doing to create more jobs in the province of Ontario for our families, and what we are doing to ensure our businesses continue to flourish?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Reliable and sufficient energy is essential, as the member from Windsor West has said many times. Reliable and sufficient energy is essential for businesses to flourish and thrive in the province.

For the past nine years, we've worked very hard to leave behind an era of brownouts and insufficient generation. We've made sure that we created sufficient supply in the province of Ontario. In the course of doing that, we're building a very strong, clean, green industry that's already more than 20,000 direct jobs in the province of Ontario.

We also now find ourselves, as a result of the world economic recession, with extra power. Yesterday, we launched the industrial electricity incentive, to make sure that we can put that extra power to work to create jobs in Ontario. We're offering that extra power to those businesses that want to set up large plants in the province of Ontario on long-term contracts and to businesses that just want to expand production as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Minister. I know that my constituents will be pleased to hear about this new initiative that will help attract jobs and investment to this province.

Minister, I know that finding ways to give large consumers a break on their electricity prices while protecting the bottom line of everyday consumers can be challenging. I know that while my constituents are pleased to see new programs that will help large customers, they don't want to see additional costs placed on their bill as a result. We need to help families and businesses while being mindful of the bottom line for both groups of customers, and I know that we've been doing that through various programs like the Ontario clean energy benefit.

Speaker, can the minister please tell us how this new program will ensure that there will not be any additional costs placed onto our Ontario ratepayers?

1110

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, once again the member from Windsor West focuses on a crucial point. This is a great program. It offers extra power so that businesses can set up large new plants, or expand their production, and get a deep discount on the extra power they'll be using.

We designed the program in a way so that we're using the extra power that's already available in the province of Ontario. We're using it more effectively. No additional costs will be placed on families and businesses. That's the design of this program. That's the magic of this program. The incentive lasts—

Interjections.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know that PCs don't want to hear this. I know that. The incentive lasts only as long as the extra jobs that are created will last.

In addition to that, of course, we've got the clean energy benefit, the energy and property tax credit and the northern Ontario energy credit.

Interjections.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know the PCs don't want to hear this. They want to go back to the era of brownouts. They want to burn coal. We want to create jobs with a good, clean, strong energy system in the province of Ontario.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Health regarding a serious incident which occurred in Peterborough. Since the member for Peterborough has not raised it, I will, on behalf of his constituents.

On March 10, 2011, a critical care land ambulance arrived at Peterborough hospital, staffed by only one advanced care paramedic. After waiting for two hours, the hospital was forced to transfer the patient by Peterborough EMS, with the Ornge paramedic on board. The minister surely knows that under the Ambulance Act, land ambulances must be staffed by at least two medics.

Mr. Speaker, incidents such as this are now commonplace in Ontario, as the McGuinty government has presided over the dramatic deterioration of our province's air ambulance service.

Will the minister admit to the people of Peterborough that her mismanagement has left them vulnerable in times of emergency?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The first thing I have to say is, the member from Peterborough is an outstanding representative of his community. I can assure you, and I can assure the people of Peterborough, that not a day goes by—indeed, not an hour goes by—that the member from Peterborough is not advocating for his community.

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The proof of that is a new hospital in his riding—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —new family health teams, new—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the House to come to order. I can't hear the minister. I have to hear the minister's response.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Indeed, the member from Peterborough is often the one who's advocating for the people of Lindsay, and indeed the people of Omemee.

What I can tell you is that the people at Ornge, those front-line staff, those paramedics who are making split-second decisions, every time do what's best for those patients. They are an outstanding group of people. I am delighted that more people are choosing to join the Ornge team.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Supplymentary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Quite frankly, Minister, the people of Peterborough and the people of Ontario deserve answers. They deserve the truth. But here you stand, denying them that right.

Nothing was done to address the issue in Peterborough. The leaked cabinet document confirms numerous examples of Ornge crews arriving understaffed and unable to provide adequate levels of care for critical patients.

Minister, you are well aware of the complaints of issues at Ornge, but you chose to stand idly by while patient safety was compromised, and it is. As much as you deny it, it is compromised.

When will you start telling the truth and do what is right by—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I ask the member to withdraw.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Haliburton, I have to ask you to withdraw.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Will the members come to order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Will the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke come to order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Please come to order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Oshawa, come to order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Halton, please come to order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, come to order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to recess the House for five minutes.

The House recessed from 1115 to 1120.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): While we have calm in the House, I wish to inform all members that if this behaviour persists, I will have no choice but to identify members by riding, and if necessary, I will name members.

We now return to the Minister of Health for her response.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: A little time has passed and—

Mr. Phil McNeely: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Continue.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Okay. Ornge has had some very troubled times. We all acknowledge that. That's why we put in new leadership. That's why there is a new board in place. That's why there's a new performance agreement.

But progress is being made. I know it's hard for the members opposite to acknowledge that we now have 10 more paramedics working at Ornge than we did a year ago. We're up to 98%. By mid-July, we'll be up to 98% when it comes to fixed-wing pilots, and 95% of our helicopter pilots. We are making progress. It's good news.

I need to say thank you to the people at Ornge for driving this change under very difficult circumstances. I think all of us in Ontario owe a big thanks to the people at Ornge.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, I introduced a private member's bill that would bring Ombudsman oversight to the children's aid society. New Democrats have introduced this bill numerous times, and families across the province have been asking for years for the accountability and oversight that only the Ombudsman can bring.

My question is simple: Will the Premier finally listen to these families and grant Ontario Ombudsman oversight over the children's aid society?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. I know the member opposite certainly doesn't intend to mislead the public into believing that there's no oversight or accountability of our children's aid societies. In fact, she might not know this: Unlike every other province in Canada, where child protection is a directly operated service of government, here in Ontario the system is completely different, where our CASs are community-based, non-profit organizations with independent boards, community oversight and community representatives that are on those boards. It's important here to note that these children's aid societies are accountable not only to the government but to the communities they serve.

I'll speak in the supplementary about measures that we've put in place to increase the accountability.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, but we don't want the minister misleading the public into thinking that there is independent oversight.

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: He said it. I repeated him.

Anyway, Ontario is the only province in Canada that does not have Ombudsman oversight over child protection services. My bill would simply ensure that Ontarians have the same level of accountability that all other Canadians have. Parents, families and New Democrats have been frustrated that this simple change has been blocked by this government.

Can the Premier tell Ontarians how much longer they will have to wait for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of the children's aid societies?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As I mentioned, our government has taken many steps to ensure the accountability of children's aid societies. We've required all the CASs to have clear, transparent and consistent complaint review procedures. We've established the independent Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, which provides an independent voice for children and youth by partnering with them to bring issues forward, and, importantly, we've increased the mandate and the powers of the Child and Family Services Review Board to independently review complaints related to children's aid societies and decisions of children's aid societies and adoption licensees. In fact, the Ombudsman may investigate complaints about the Child and Family Services Review Board and report and issue recommendations arising from such a review.

The Child and Family Services Review Board is fully mandated under the Child and Family Services Act and operates independent of government to hear and resolve complaints brought to it relating to child protection.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Education. Before my election to this House last fall, I was privileged to serve as a Toronto District School Board trustee. This gives me a unique perspective on the current discussion about funding for the school boards.

As a former school board trustee, I also know that the McGuinty government's support for education in Ontario is unparalleled. I know that this government has restored public confidence in our schools after many years of cuts and neglect under the previous PC government.

In spite of the significant investment in education we have seen over the past eight years, I read in the news today that some of the school boards are struggling to balance their budgets. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Minister, can you please share with the House what the government is doing to support the Toronto District School Board this year?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for her leadership in this area and her long history of supporting public education in the city of Toronto, in particular the TDSB.

We've been very clear with our message to boards. We've held education funding stable this year, and it is our expectation that they will balance their budgets while protecting the classroom experience for our students.

Our record of support for the Toronto District School Board, the biggest school board in Canada, is incredibly strong. Since 2003, we've increased funding to the TDSB by almost \$700 million, a 34% increase, and that is at the same time as we have seen the TDSB enrolment decline by 12%. So that works out to a more than 50% per-pupil funding increase in the TDSB. In addition, we've provided \$1 billion in capital funding and funding for over 1,600 new teachers, and we're rolling out full-day kindergarten, with more classes this year and next year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Minister. I know that the school board shares your goals and the goals of this government of protecting the gains that we have made in education over the past eight years and protecting the classroom experience for students.

I hear from my constituents in Scarborough—Agincourt that good schools for their kids are one of the most important things to them. No one—not Ontario families, not teachers and not school boards—wants to go back to the dark days in education that we saw under the previous PC government.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Minister, what are you doing to protect education in Ontario?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very proud to be part of a government that always focuses on our students in our classroom and ensuring that they are getting what they need in those classrooms.

We've taken an incredibly different approach than the previous PC government. The PC government closed 500 schools; we've opened 400 schools.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Ontario lost 15,000 teachers under the last PC government, and we've hired almost 13,000 teachers. Students lost 26 million teaching days due to strikes.

I couldn't be prouder of a government that continues to invest in public education. Despite these very challenging economic times, we've increased funding for education by 45% since coming to office, and it is having a real and meaningful impact in our classrooms. And if we focus just on one element, full-day kindergarten in the city of Toronto and the TDSB: 63 classes this year; 323 full-day kindergarten classes in September. What an incredible legacy—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

New question.

1130

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, this session is drawing quickly to a close, and because the situation with my constituent Liam Reid is far from being resolved, again I have to bring up this matter with you.

As we all know, another child in Ontario has been approved by the Ministry of Health to receive treatment out of country for an eye disorder known as PFVS/Norrie's. This child has received approval for 49 medical treatments in Michigan for exactly the same condition, so a clear precedent has been set by your ministry.

My question to you is, what possible justification could there be for refusing Liam the same opportunities to receive the treatment out of country for him?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I met your little constituent when you brought him here earlier this week, and he's the same age as my grandkids. I can tell you that if it was my grandchild that needed that kind of treatment, I would fight as hard for my grandchild as those parents are fighting for Liam.

The member opposite knows I cannot speak to individual cases, but what I can say is that everyone in Ontario deserves the best possible health care. They deserve to get that care in Ontario whenever possible, and when it's not available in Ontario, then it's up to us to make sure they get that care outside of Ontario.

I can assure the member opposite, as she knows, that I have instructed my officials to look into this case, and that work is under way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Minister, here's the problem with your response: There's already another child who has been approved for treatment in Ontario, and you're suggesting that the Reid family now go back to square one and start this process all over again. Time is of the essence here. This is a child who, within a year, without treatment, may well go completely blind. It's untenable to suggest that you should put this family through this.

The specialist at the Hospital for Sick Children has already indicated that they do not want to operate on Liam anymore, that there's nothing further that they can offer him locally.

Minister, I can tell you what I'm hearing from the people of the province of Ontario about this: Offers to support Liam personally are flooding in. But that's not what our health care system exists for. We should be able to provide this child with the treatment that he needs to prevent him from going completely blind. He is suffering from the brunt of a bureaucratic failure. Will you please recognize that failure and do what's necessary to give Liam the treatment that he needs now?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I've said, I cannot speak to any specific case. The member opposite knows that. What I can tell you, though, is that we have highly, highly skilled people in Ontario right down the street at Sick Kids Hospital. We want to get the right care to this child, like we do for every child in this province—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Halton.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —so we are doing the work that is necessary. The member opposite understands that.

I also urge her to understand that every case is different. We are doing everything possible, and we must let the system work.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Every Ontarian deserves a family doctor and access to specialist care when they need it.

On Monday, I visited Kitchener–Waterloo to talk to them about doctor shortages in their community. The situation of doctor shortages is a tough enough one, a stressful enough one, for healthy Ontarians, but imagine how hard it is on a family whose loved one is dealing with complex life-threatening issues.

Cody Richards is a brave kid who's falling through the cracks of Ontario's health care system. His mother, Heather, has written to the health minister for some help, but nobody seems to be listening to Cody and his mother.

What is the government doing to make sure that Kitchener–Waterloo residents like Cody and people across the province with complex cases have the access they need to a family doctor and specialist care?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you very much to the member opposite for this very important question. She's asked an important question, and she has made an important statement: that people in Ontario do deserve access to primary care. I could not agree more.

We've actually made tremendous progress. In fact, Speaker, in the Waterloo region, we now have 134 more physicians working than when we took office. That is a remarkable accomplishment: 22.3% more physicians working now than just eight years ago.

We've got 10 family health teams in the Kitchener–Waterloo area. They've hired 168 doctors, 136 health professionals to support the work of the family health teams. They're providing care, those 10 family health teams, to a quarter of a million people in the Kitchener–Waterloo area. Some 48,000 of those people previously did not have a doctor. So we're making tremendous progress, and we will continue to do exactly that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, 20,000 people in Kitchener–Waterloo still don't have a family doctor, and Cody is one of them. Cody has no family doctor, he has no diagnosis and he has no referral to a neurosurgeon. In

fact, 17 Ontario neurosurgeons have refused to treat him, based on the complexity of his case, which is only getting worse day by day.

Cody and his family need to focus on his health and not worry about scrambling to find doctors who are willing to help him. He has lost feeling from the waist down, his vision is failing, he's suffering from seizures and body tremors, and maybe things will get even worse. Cody is losing hope.

Will this government show some compassion and see to it that Cody Richards gets the medical care he so desperately needs and should have access to in a province like Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are working very hard and achieving tremendous results, in partnership with our doctors, to provide the best possible care for all Ontarians, and that includes the people in Kitchener–Waterloo. We do rely on the best advice of doctors. We are working very hard. In fact, we're doubling the number of doctors who are starting to practise, every year.

The system is responding to what frankly was a very, very troubled system when we took office. We had a terrible brain drain when we took office in 2003. Doctors were leaving Ontario to practise elsewhere. They were leaving by the dozens. We've turned that right around in Ontario because it is such a great place to practise medicine. It is attracting people here because they want to practise here in Ontario. That work is not complete, but we have made significant progress.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. There's a huge condo community in my riding of Don Valley East. It includes residents who have been living there for years and residents who have recently purchased condominium units.

Many of these residents have raised concerns about the Condominium Act. They feel that the act, which is supposed to address their concerns, is either not applicable to their specific situation or it does not adequately cover their specific concern.

Minister, with many areas in Ontario undergoing an explosion in both condominium development and an increasing number of individuals choosing to purchase condominium units, can you please tell this House how we plan to address their various concerns?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank my colleague from Don Valley East for this very important question and for being such a great advocate for his constituents.

The condominium sector has undergone significant changes since the Condominium Act came into force some 11 years ago. In fact, in Ontario, over one million people live in condominiums. It was estimated in 2010 that there were over 525,000 condominium units in this province. It is expected that this year alone, 35,000 new units will be added to the GTA market.

The rapid growth in the condominium marketplace has outpaced the Condominium Act. We all agree that the Condominium Act is in need of modernization to better

reflect the needs of Ontarians, and it must be done in a collaborative manner. Our government recently announced that the Ministry of Consumer Services will be conducting a broad review of the act—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Supplementary question.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you for the answer, Minister. I'm excited to hear about the proactive action being taken in order to address the issues affecting the overall sector. It is true that it is a growing sector, one that requires not only an effective government involvement but involvement from the sector, which includes both owners and residents.

What I have seen in my own riding is the evolving nature of the condominium market. I find that many who buy condominiums are not aware of all the complexities involved in owning this type of housing, as it differs quite extensively from owning a freehold house.

Some of the concerns I hear from my constituents with their own condos are so wide in different issues and range in different points. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can the minister explain how this public engagement process to review the act will be able to address these wide-ranging issues in the condominium sector?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: The aim of this public engagement process is to identify a comprehensive set of issues and address them through long-term solutions in a co-operative and consultative manner, as were brought up by the member from Don Valley East.

The public engagement approach we are proposing will provide the opportunity to hear the full spectrum of issues the sector faces so we can find solutions that work and that ultimately reflect our goal of providing active protection to consumers.

Mr. Speaker, the key word here is "active"—solutions that work well into the future as the condominium marketplace continues to evolve. Given the complexity of the issues involved, the diversity of condominium types, owners, demographics and the change in landscape of the condominium marketplace, it is important that all stakeholders have an opportunity to voice their input during the process. That is why we will be using a broad public engagement process.

ABORIGINAL LAND CLAIMS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Minister, during your ministerial statement last week you stated about taking "the responsibility for creating a new relationship very seriously, including provision" of building "stronger relationships" with First Nations. Yet during my reply, you were quite upset when I questioned the consultation process dealing with the Algonquin land claim.

Minister, if the consultation process is so well received, then why is it that I'm receiving responses from organizations like the Land O' Lakes tourism, the Canadian Sportfishing Industry and the Archdiocese of Ottawa, claiming, "Please be advised that I do not recall

any formal consultation process?" And these are from your own organizations.

Minister, can you explain why I'm receiving responses like this if the consultation process is being open and fair?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm pleased to talk to this land claim because it is ongoing, and I think the point that the member opposite is missing is that the consultation is ongoing. In order to find a practical settlement, we know that we have to continue to talk with many groups, including elected local government officials, sport, recreational and environmental groups, local businesses, aboriginal communities and many others across the land claim areas.

We're very clear that there are groups that haven't been spoken with. We understand that. We're hoping that an agreement in principle will be able to be reached this year. Being able to reach that settlement will provide certainty for all of those people that I spoke about. But the bottom line is that we do need to continue to consult. That is ongoing, and all of those groups will be included.

VISITORS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Earlier today, we had grades four and five from Queen Elizabeth Public School in the public west gallery. I'd like to welcome the students, the teachers, the parents and grandparents. They certainly enjoyed question period today; no doubt about that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome two of my constituents to the House today. Cynthia Gentle and Ciara Gentle are joining us in the gallery. Welcome. I hope you enjoyed yourselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I hope you enjoyed question period more than the Speaker did.

DEFERRED VOTES

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (RENT INCREASE GUIDELINE), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION (TAUX LÉGAL D'AUGMENTATION DES LOYERS)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne le taux légal d'augmentation des loyers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1149.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): On June 12, Ms. Wynne moved third reading of Bill 19.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Duncan, Dwight	Milloy, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Forster, Cindy	Murray, Glen R.
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras
Best, Margaret	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Piruzza, Teresa
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Broten, Laurel C.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Campbell, Sarah	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Schein, Jonah
Chiarelli, Bob	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	Mantha, Michael	Sorbara, Greg
Craitor, Kim	Marchese, Rosario	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Matthews, Deborah	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Taylor, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	McGuinty, Dalton	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
DiNovo, Cheri	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those opposed will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	McDonell, Jim	Pettapiece, Randy
Dunlop, Garfield	McKenna, Jane	Scott, Laurie
Elliott, Christine	McNaughton, Monte	Smith, Todd
Harris, Michael	Miller, Norm	Thompson, Lisa M.
Jackson, Rod	Milligan, Rob E.	Walker, Bill
Jones, Sylvia	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Klees, Frank	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff
MacLaren, Jack	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 60; the nays are 26.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 3 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RETIREMENT HOMES

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a real pleasure to rise today and address an issue that the McGuinty government may not even be aware of but they are responsible for. The members of the House should know that the McGuinty government has a new tax, and this tax is targeting the most vulnerable citizens of Ontario: seniors.

In 2010, the government passed an act dealing with the regulation of retirement homes through the creation of the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority. This organization was given complete power to collect new fees and charges from retirement home residents.

Sure enough, on May 25, this Liberal government slapped retirement home residents with another rate increase of \$10 per month per resident. That's \$120 a year out of their pockets. The minister responsible for seniors will say that this was done to improve safety at retirement homes. Nothing could be further from the truth. Unfortunately, this has turned into another tax on seniors—like electricity.

I would like to thank those who have raised this issue, including my constituents Mike and Karen Ross, who have contacted me on behalf of their father. Seniors are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. How are fixed-income seniors going to afford the cost of living in Ontario? This is simply unacceptable.

The members of the government side should be ashamed of themselves. When you think of it, their mothers and fathers—all of them—will need care. There are no more long-term-care beds being built. They think that retirement homes are going to solve the problem. The average cost at a retirement home is between \$3,500 and \$7,500 a month. It's unbelievable what they're doing to seniors in this province. They can hardly afford to stay in their homes. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

Somebody should stand up for the seniors of the province of Ontario.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to address the situation of Mr. Gabe West in my riding. Mr. West is a 35-year-old man who has been diagnosed with cognitive impairment, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, cortical blindness and a non-functioning bladder. Gabe requires 24-hour support to meet his health and safety needs.

He has a dedicated group of people in his life, his support team, who ensure that he continues to live in his own place in an independent way and will have strong relationships and connections with the communities he chooses. Gabe's friends have developed a model of support that works for Gabe. They've developed a creative support plan that's built on his gifts and his strengths.

The funding Gabe currently receives is inadequate and poses a barrier to allowing him to exercise his right to live in and contribute to his community. His current funding allotment is not sufficient to address all his support needs. His support team has submitted a proposal for funds to ensure that Gabe has the right supports in place to meet his unique needs, ensure his health and safety and allow him to continue to contribute to the community.

The Ministry of Health needs to make more funding available—adequate funding—to support Gabe and others like him. He needs permanent funding to plan his future.

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA HEART INSTITUTE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's a pleasure to rise today and highlight a fantastic health and research institution based in my riding of Ottawa Centre and serving eastern Ontario. Indeed, Speaker, I'm proud to say today that it is a leader in the whole world as well.

The University of Ottawa Heart Institute has recently been ranked as one of the top research centres in the world. The Scimago Institutions Rankings, or SIR, world report ranks the research impact of institutions and companies worldwide and is the most comprehensive ranking of its kind. The heart institute was ranked 57th out of over 3,000 organizations across the globe, which in total are responsible for more than 80% of worldwide scientific output. By contrast, respected American institutions such as the Cleveland Clinic and the Mayo Clinic were ranked at number 133 and number 154, respectively.

Looking at the results in more detail, the news gets better. The Ottawa heart institute is number two in the world among all heart institutes for research impact. Canada-wide, the University of Ottawa Heart Institute was ranked eighth overall, showing that great work benefiting science, the economy and, most importantly, people's health is happening right here in Ottawa. In fact, Canada, as a whole, can be tremendously proud of the results of this ranking, as 10 of the top 75 rankings are Canadian institutes.

I'm very proud of the work done at the heart institute, both in research and in patient care. I know how important this institution is to the people of my community and in eastern Ontario.

WILLIAMSTOWN FAIR

Mr. Jim McDonnell: This summer, on August 10, 11 and 12, the Williamstown Fair will be celebrating its 200th anniversary.

From humble beginnings in the streets of Williamstown, recognized by proclamation and letters patent by Francis Gore, the Lieutenant Governor, in 1808, to the present-day site donated by Sir John Johnson in 1812, the Williamstown Fair continues to be the annual gathering place for thousands of area residents and our rural community, as well as many visitors from afar.

This fair has a glorious history, designated as Canada's oldest fair, and early indications also indicate that it is in fact North America's oldest fair.

The settlers of this region of Upper Canada came to Glengarry county in Ontario from their native Glengarry region in Scotland and as United Empire Loyalists from the United States to start a new life, building farms and villages and looking to create a good life for themselves and their children.

The fair started as a forum to promote and advance agriculture and their community. Today, hundreds of volunteers come together with pride to host this old-time agricultural fair, making improvements to the infrastructure and to the venue.

I wish to congratulate the members of the St. Lawrence Valley Agricultural Society on a job well done and to join them in welcoming one and all to celebrate this historic anniversary.

MEMBER'S APPRECIATION

Mr. Jonah Schein: As this session draws to a close, I'd like to take a moment to give thanks to a number of people. I feel lucky every day that I'm in here, not just because I'm fortunate to have a job, but I have a very good job and have the great honour to represent the amazing riding of Davenport.

I want to acknowledge the volunteers, my riding association and my campaign team. Not a day goes by here when I don't remember what you've done to make sure that I can be here to represent you. Thank you.

To our caucus team, our researchers, our communications folks, all of you—we have an incredible team here in this building working for us. You've been amazing—incredible support every day, and I'm incredibly thankful for all the work you've done.

I want to shout out to Michael Rosenstock and Valerie Fogarty, who are going to be leaving us, which is very sad news for us, but thank you. You folks are amazing.

Our caucus of 17 members: I'm incredibly proud of what we've done in just a few short months. I can't wait to see what we accomplish in the months ahead and, when we have more members, what we're going to do.

To my friends and family: I love you. I miss you. I hope to see you more this summer. Thanks for supporting me.

To our supporters in Davenport, the folks who elected me: Thank you. I appreciate your urgency. I know that there's so much more we have to do. We've accomplished a lot. I'm actually very hopeful that we have a progressive wave that is sweeping this country from coast to coast and this province, but we have far more to do. I promise to keep on bringing progressive values into this Legislature.

WHIRLPOOL CANADA AND AMGEN CANADA

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to tell Ontarians about two outstanding Mississauga businesses, both in the north-west Mississauga neighbourhood of Meadowvale.

Whirlpool Canada's headquarters employs some 250 people. Many of Whirlpool's employees are residents of Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville.

Once again, Whirlpool has won the Energy Star award for manufacturer of the year, achieving a company milestone for Energy Star-qualified major household appliances manufactured in Canada last year.

Congratulations to the hard-working employees of Whirlpool on their recent award and for building and selling the innovative stoves, fridges, washers, dryers, dishwashers and microwaves and many others that we all buy and use under many brand names to help us save energy and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

1510

Amgen Canada's Spotlight on Science Learning is a recent initiative in partnership with Let's Talk Science. This study analyzes the key public indicators of science, technology, engineering and math learning starting in elementary and secondary school, moving on through post-secondary education and going into the workforce.

Ontario's competitive edge in an increasingly knowledge-based economy is a large and versatile pool of science-based talent to build and manage science and technology businesses right here in Ontario. Whirlpool and Amgen both do important work in building tomorrow's Ontario.

FRIDAY THE 13th, PORT DOVER

Mr. Toby Barrett: As you will know, Speaker, what began in 1981 with half a dozen bikers has grown to next month's Friday the 13th in Port Dover. It's expected to draw 170,000 people. I know there were 150,000 last August.

On Friday the 13th, you find doctors, mechanics, librarians, Hells Angels and Orange County Choppers. A few years ago, George Smitherman got into the spirit with a ride from Toronto to Norfolk General to tour our local hospital.

I invite all to Dover. Park your Harley-Davidson. Go for a stroll. Take in the sights; smell the leather and the fumes. There's a lot of "show and shine" and unique fashion.

This year, bikers have been blessed with three PD 13 events: January, April, and July, which is expected to be the hottest in more ways than one.

Kudos to those who work well ahead and on the day itself. Public safety is critical, and it's not always easy. With bylaw officers, OPP, paramedics and firefighters, PD 13 will be well in hand again.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the Port Dover Kinsmen Club and the Port Dover Board of Trade, the backbones of Friday the 13th as, again, they help realize the valuable tourism dollars.

So, Speaker, saddle up and come over to Dover, Friday the 13th.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll do that.

Mr. Toby Barrett: See you there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do I have to wear my chaps?

Mr. Toby Barrett: You might want to wear more than that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I earned that one.

HONG FOOK MENTAL HEALTH
ASSOCIATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members' statements? The member from—

Ms. Soo Wong: Scarborough-Agincourt.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agincourt, right. Scarborough-Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to stand in this House to recognize the 30th anniversary of Hong Fook Mental Health Association, headquartered in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt. For the past 30 years, Hong Fook has been a model organization in promoting mental health and providing essential support among the Asian communities of Toronto, North York and Scarborough.

Hong Fook has four main goals: promote the development of healthy mental status; increase public awareness and knowledge of mental health and mental health illnesses; provide culturally competent, community-based social support services; and improve the quality of life of and assist persons with serious mental health issues.

We all know that social stigmas around mental health issues cause some of us to keep silent, further perpetuating the issue. This isn't right. One in five Ontarians will experience mental health issues in their lifetime. That is why organizations like Hong Fook are important. They reach out to the community and provide a safe place for people to come to, and educate others about mental health.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Hong Fook executive director Bonnie Wong; the founding members, Dr. Peter Chang, Raymond Chung and Dr. Ted Lo; and the hundreds of volunteers for their 30 years of tireless work in providing essential services, support and training to those in need. Thank you for your dedicated services and for being a model organization for others to follow.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member from Scarborough-Agincourt. I was too focused on wearing my chaps, so I apologize.

McINTOSH UNITED CHURCH WOMEN

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: The community of McIntosh, located in Howick township in Huron county, has one landmark building, and it proves to be representative of the heart, pride and bond that holds the entire community together. This building is the McIntosh United Church. I rise today to recognize the 50th anniversary of the McIntosh United Church Women, UCW. It was celebrated on June 3 with a special service.

The women's association joined the women's missionary society to form the UCW. The groups joined together to efficiently accomplish many great things, as the church is the centre of life for many people in the McIntosh community. Again, the UCW unites the women of the congregation in the total mission of the church and provides a medium for ladies to express their loyalty and devotion to the church. The McIntosh UCW was created in 1962 so that women could share in a meaningful way in all the work of the church.

The UCW has charter members who are still active, including my own grandmother Laurine Wright and other members of the community, including Helene Haskins, Alberta Fergusson, Ellen Harkness, Margaret Woods and Mary Renwick. Laurine's children, no strangers to the

McIntosh choir loft—Winona, Sandra, June, Janette and Rod—provided the music for this special occasion.

Best wishes to the McIntosh UCW on your 50th anniversary, and may you continue to follow the way of witness, study, fellowship and service that is your heritage.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Davenport on a point of order.

Mr. Jonah Schein: On a point of order—I'm sure this is a point of order—I did forget to thank my office staff: Jen Barrett, Sam Spady, Victoria Marshall, Andrew Pickles and Shirley Alvarez. You guys are truly amazing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You are right, that is not a point of order, but I'm going to let that one go through, for sure.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (BINDING ARBITRATION), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (ARBITRAGE EXÉCUTOIRE)

Mr. Natyshak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to binding arbitration / Projet de loi 113, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui concerne l'arbitrage exécutoire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: From the explanatory note: The act amends the Labour Relations Act, 1995, to provide that where certain collective agreements have expired and a strike or lockout has been in progress for more than 180 days, either party to the expired agreement may ask the Ontario Labour Relations Board to direct the settlement of the provisions of a new collective agreement by binding arbitration. The board may only direct binding arbitration if the board determines that the party making the application is bargaining in good faith and that a new collective agreement is unlikely to be concluded within 30 days of continued bargaining. The bill provides that when the board notifies the parties of its direction to settle the provisions of a collective agreement, the employees shall forthwith terminate the strike, or the employer shall forthwith terminate the lockout. The employer is also required to reinstate the employees in the bargaining unit in accordance with the applicable provisions of the act.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise in the House today to provide members with an update on our government's commitment to establish a personal support worker registry. I am delighted to be joined in the east members' gallery by Susan Thorning and Monica Testa-Zanin, from the Ontario Community Support Association; and PSWs Maureen Hylton, Roger Dilhamohamed and Alex Bikov. They are here with Doug Brodhead of my office, Speaker.

Personal support workers, or PSWs, play a crucial role in our health care system. They make an enormous contribution to the health and well-being of Ontarians. There are an estimated 90,000 PSWs working in Ontario. They are performing essential services for their clients. They help with daily activities such as personal hygiene and delegated health procedures like changing dressings, among others. They help people of all ages recover from illness, live with a chronic disease or disability, and live at home with independence and dignity as long as possible.

1520

One year ago, I committed to establishing a personal support worker registry to better recognize the work they do for Ontarians while helping to meet the needs of the people they care for.

As Yvonne Greaves, a personal support worker, said, "I feel the role personal support workers play in the health system is finally being recognized in this province."

I'm very happy to report that the PSW registry is now online and open for registration in Ontario. This is an important milestone and an initiative that will better help meet the needs of seniors, people with disabilities and those with complex needs, along with their families. Once the personal support workers register, employers, clients and family caregivers will be able to confirm that their PSWs are registered. The registry will promote greater accountability and transparency and will validate the contribution of PSWs.

I'd like to thank the Ontario Community Support Association and all members of the PSW registry steering committee for their leadership in the development and implementation of this registry. The steering committee is made up of a wide range of experts, including PSW advocacy organizations, client and family advocacy groups, unions, employer associations, educational associations as well as several front-line PSWs. My heartfelt appreciation goes to everyone who has worked so hard to make this registry possible. We will continue to rely on their advice as we move forward with the implementation of the registry.

I'm pleased to say that our government has already taken a number of steps in supporting our PSWs. We invest \$10 million a year to train PSWs for work in the community care sector in areas such as palliative care,

acquired brain injury and mental health. Since 2006, we have provided \$27.4 million to increase the base wage of qualified PSWs and improve travel compensation, training and other benefits.

I am very pleased to report to the Legislature that the registry, pswregistry.org, began registering PSWs on June 1, starting with PSWs in the home care sector. Hundreds have already registered, and by August of this year we hope to have the majority of the 26,000 PSWs in the home care sector registered. This registry will continue to expand and will eventually include PSWs working in hospitals and long-term-care homes.

PSWs play a critical role in bringing our government's action plan for health care to life. The plan is a blueprint for health care transformation and addresses both the demographic and fiscal challenges that we face. A big part of the transformation involves a shift away from acute care towards more home and community care.

Our goal is to make Ontario the healthiest place in North America to grow up and grow old in, and we will get there by focusing on wellness, by providing faster access to family care and by providing access to the right care at the right time and in the right place. For our seniors, the right place to receive care, whenever possible, is at home in their community, close to their friends, their family, their neighbours. Better access to home care services allows seniors to age in dignity and with independence at home. Most of this care will be provided by personal support workers.

We are driving real change at an accelerated pace because we simply must provide better care for an aging population while achieving better value. Last month, our government announced that we will be adding an additional three million hours of care by PSWs over the next three years, including an estimated one million more hours this year.

We're taking strong action by choosing to freeze total compensation for our doctors so that we can afford home care for 90,000 more seniors. This investment is part of our budget's commitment to increase funding for home and community care by 4% over each of the next three years. That's an additional \$526 million annually by 2014-15.

As we implement our action plan, we know we can depend on personal support workers to provide vital services that make such a difference to the quality of life for so many Ontarians. No matter the setting in which they work, personal support workers make an enormous contribution to the health of their clients and to our entire health care system.

I want to say a heartfelt thank you to Ontario's dedicated personal support workers for all that they do on behalf of Ontarians, and now, thanks to this registry, they're getting the recognition they so richly deserve.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Today I am pleased to provide an update on a very important set of negotiations that will affect the future of our agri-food sector.

This sector, as members of this assembly know, is a strong contributor to Ontario, our way of life and our economy. Our farmers grow and raise more than 200 commodities. We have about 3,000 food and beverage manufacturers—more than any other province in this nation. We have an innovative and growing bioproducts sector, with more than 30% of these kinds of businesses located right here in this province.

Overall, the sector is important. It is responsible for \$33 billion of the provincial GDP and accounts for more than 700,000 jobs. That is why current negotiations with the federal government are so important.

Growing Forward is an agreement with Ottawa to help this sector manage risk and respond to market demands. It is set to expire on March 31, 2013. The federal government is looking to sign a new agreement in September of this year so programs can be ready for an April 1, 2013 start—a seamless transition, if you like. Under this agreement, there are business risk management programs that provide for farm income support and production insurance against weather-related losses.

There are also strategic initiatives that help the industry adopt best practices related to business development, food safety, biosecurity, environmental stewardship, and research and innovation. Under the national framework, programs are jointly funded, with the federal government paying 60% of the share, so the stakes are very high. We stand with our stakeholders in insisting that the federal government maintain an efficient and effective suite of this kind of programming. Farmers need the stability these programs provide to be able to make long-term investments in their operations.

On strategic initiatives, we want to get our fair share of federal funding in order to have as much flexibility as possible to meet the needs of the entire Ontario agri-food sector, including food processing and bioproducts manufacturing.

I want to assure everyone that we are engaging stakeholders every step of the way. We want as much input as we can get to inform our position, support our efforts and implement the activities we need to implement as we move forward.

Rest assured, we will push for the best possible deal for our Ontario stakeholders to advance our goal of successful and sustainable agri-food and agri-products businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's a privilege to rise today to speak on behalf of the Ontario PC Party as we celebrate personal support workers across Ontario.

1530

Personal support workers embody the very best of our communities, as well as the future of our health care system.

While PSWs play a significant role in traditional care settings, your valuable work stretches beyond the hos-

pital, providing care in schools, community centres and of course the home. You are the eyes and ears for the persons that you are supporting, and you provide the essential link in communication between the other health care agencies that are involved in providing care to that person. Simply put, these dedicated, hard-working members of our health care community provide front-line care and support wherever it's needed.

Not only is your industry on the cutting edge of delivering patient-centred, compassionate care, but your dynamic profession is vital to effectively and efficiently facilitating recovery.

Personal support workers are instrumental in the daily activities of every kind of individual in our society, from children to adults to the frail and everyone in between. In this capacity, you play a critical role in personal recovery and community prosperity.

I'm also very pleased that the PSW registry is now online and open for registration. I'm sure that's going to continue to assist in the very effective and important work that you do.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, I'd like to thank each and every personal support worker for the phenomenal work that you do in our communities and the phenomenal contribution you make to our province. I wish you every success as you continue in this noble work.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs.

Minister, it is your job to ensure our farmers have the programs they need. There are two important programs under review: AgriStability and the risk management program.

Changes to AgriStability are negotiated. If the agreement isn't in the interest of Ontario farmers, your job is to negotiate to make it better. The provinces must agree on changes, and we expect, as do farmers, that you will not sign a new agreement unless it benefits Ontario farmers.

Your job is also to ensure that the provincial government works for farmers. Just before the election, the McGuinty government announced a permanent risk management program. Already, you are reviewing the program and are proposing changes to what was supposed to be a permanent program. We recognize that this government has spent their way into a huge financial problem, but Minister, the situation wasn't that different a year ago when you made the promise.

Before the election, your party also promised farmers a one-window approach to cut red tape. Now you've backed away from that commitment too.

Ontario farmers are watching. They're watching to see if this minister will show leadership in negotiations to reach a positive agreement for Ontario farmers. They're also watching, and still waiting, to see if this government will actually keep its campaign promises. Finally, they

are watching and still waiting to see if this government will stand up for rural Ontario.

On issue after issue, this government has failed rural Ontario. If this government can't stand up for rural Ontario, I can assure the minister that we will.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: It's my pleasure to respond to the statement by the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Growing Forward, a federal-provincial framework of agriculture programs, is set to expire in March 2013. The sequel to this set of programs, Growing Forward 2, is currently being negotiated by the federal and provincial agriculture ministers. Through the years, these programs have gained a catchy title and heavy doses of buzzwords like "innovation," "competitiveness" and "environmental sustainability." But in our consultations with the agricultural sector, there are a few principles that the Minister of Agriculture must keep in mind in his negotiations with the federal government, other provinces and at his own cabinet table.

At their core, these programs are a partnership between producers and governments of all levels to help insulate the agricultural sector from some of the risks that are inherent in the industry, from crop production failures to wild fluctuation in world commodity prices. This suite of programs has evolved to maintain some stability in the industry and the rural economy which supports much of the province. While Growing Forward has its limitations, overall the program had a positive impact for farmers in Ontario.

Grain farmers like Norm Koch and cattlemen like Matt Bowman are concerned about the direction that governments of all levels are taking. The agriculture sector is currently in the high part of the commodity price cycle, while governments are currently looking for ways to slash budget deficits. This perfect storm could lead to the cutting of long-fought-for solid program funding, to be replaced by heartwarming but empty buzzwords.

When the low part of the price cycle returns, as it inevitably will, and the chickens come home to roost, the question will be: Will they still have a real framework to rest on, or will it collapse on empty promises?

The Ontario NDP will remain vigilant to ensure that provincial and federal programs like AgriStability and business risk management are maintained and that governments of all levels will work together instead of blaming each other. On behalf of the 700,000 people who work in Ontario agriculture, we urge the minister to do likewise.

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is always a good day at Queen's Park when representatives of personal support workers come to visit us. I'm really happy that they took time out of their busy schedules to come to Queen's Park. We all know how busy they are.

PSWs, as they are called, work in hospitals—9,000 of them work in hospitals—the majority of them work in the long-term-care system—they are the backbone of our long-term-care system—and 26,000 of them, as we've heard, work in our home care system. Those are people who work hard and certainly deserve to be praised for the good work that they do.

But to me, recognition could go a whole lot further, because if you look at all of the 26,000 PSWs working in the home care system, most of them make wages barely above minimum wage. Minimum wage in Ontario is \$10.25. You will see many PSWs who don't make \$2 more an hour than minimum wage. Many of them work for \$12, \$12.25 an hour.

To add to this, if they are in the home care system, they travel on their own time. A PSW who works in Nickel Belt showed me her mileage sheets: close to 700 kilometres every two weeks. Just think of how long it takes, on the bad roads of Nickel Belt, to travel over 700 kilometres. In your wildest dreams, it will take you at least 14 hours to do this. That's 14 hours that you put in to work but that you don't get paid for, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to recognize PSWs by making home care jobs good jobs. Make home care jobs good jobs, and all of a sudden a big chunk of your problem with emergency rooms will be completely resolved. Look at the 4,000 people who are in hospital beds who would like to be home. Fix the problem. Make home care jobs good jobs, make PSW jobs and home care jobs good jobs, and a lot of those beds would be empty, would be available for a hospital to do their work, because those people would be safe living in their own home, where, as the minister said, they are better looked after. And this is where they want to go.

I kind of always knew this, but it was a PSW who really drove it home for me: Never, never underestimate the power of home. People who are frail, people who need support—you bring them back home with the support of a PSW and they bloom again. They're interested in life. They want to continue. They heal themselves and certainly are happy to be there.

I'm happy to recognize PSWs. You do fantastic work. Thank you for being there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to share this petition that I totally support. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care unilaterally introduced cuts to the ophthal-

mology funding for physician services and diagnostic testing, retroactive to April 1, 2012; and

"Whereas the legislative cuts to the funding for ophthalmology diagnostic tests are up to 80%; and

"Whereas these cuts were implemented without consulting physicians about the impact such cuts will have on the health care of patients;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect ophthalmology services and consult with the physicians before making cuts to our health care system."

I totally support it and affix my signature.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, it should come as no surprise: I have 4,000 signatures for an auto insurance petition. The petition reads as follows:

1540

"Auto insurance reform needed: Protect consumers.

"Whereas auto insurance rates are too high in the province of Ontario and continue to increase;

"Whereas families across the greater Toronto area (GTA) are facing unfair insurance premiums that have more to do with where they live than their accident history or driving ability; and

"Whereas insurance premiums across the GTA differ by as much as 150% for drivers with the same driving record;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly undertake auto insurance reforms that protect consumers, ensuring that premiums are based on a fair assessment of a driver's known ability and history, rather than unfairly targeting drivers on the basis of where they live."

I strongly agree with the petition. I will hand it to Daxime, who will present it to the clerks.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Katie.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas certain commercial operations known as 'puppy mills' have been reported to keep animals in precarious conditions in breach of provincial animal welfare laws; and

"Whereas dog breeding in accordance with the law is a legitimate economic activity; and

"Whereas it is the duty of any government to ensure that the laws of Canada and Ontario are respected;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services work proactively with all amateur and professional dog breeders, as well as consumers, with the intent to tackle confirmed animal cruelty cases in puppy mills and to educate all stakeholders about animal welfare standards."

I agree with the petition, will be signing it and passing it off to page Sherry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Petitions? The member for—I think I've done rotation here. The member for Essex.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present petitions on behalf of members of my community.

"To the Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for the province of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of the province of Ontario, hereby implore you to return to the table to negotiate an agreement for fair compensation to doctors in the best interests of taxpayers of Ontario."

I agree with this petition, will submit my name and present it to the clerks' office.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further petitions? I don't know where he left off. The member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition from my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas recovering from injuries or illnesses at home can enhance recovery, reduce the strain on our health care system and provide comfort to patients;

"Whereas family caregivers need to focus on what matters most—providing care and support to their loved one—without the fear of losing their job;

"Whereas Ontarians who need to care for seriously ill or injured loved ones need job protection;

"Whereas the Family Caregiver Leave Act, if passed, would build on existing family medical leave to provide up to eight weeks of unpaid job leave for employees to provide care and support to a sick or injured family member;

"Whereas the PCs have pledged to vote against the bill, and permanently kill the legislation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties recognize the importance of health, family, and job security by supporting the Family Caregiver Leave Act to protect the jobs of working Ontarians who need to care for seriously ill or injured loved ones."

I fully support this petition, I affix my signature and ask page Annaleise bring it to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cardiologists provide accessible, efficient, and cost-effective diagnostic testing services that save, and improve, the lives of thousands of people each year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's unilateral, punitive changes to the OHIP fee schedule will result in the elimination of these crucial services, thereby leading to a reduction in patient access to care, the lengthening of waiting lists for services, the eradication of high-quality health professional jobs, and an increase in preventable deaths; and

"Whereas the Ontario Association of Cardiologists has presented an alternative, namely, the implementation of new, rigorous standards, which would ensure that cardiac diagnostic tests are done on the right patients, at the right time, by appropriately trained people, in accredited facilities, thereby reducing the number of inappropriate tests and leading to significant financial savings for the government; and

"Whereas the proposal has the endorsement of the highly respected Cardiac Care Network of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Direct the Ontario government to repeal the OHIP fee schedule regulation changes filed on May 7, 2012, and instruct the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to work with the Ontario Association of Cardiologists to implement proposed cardiac diagnostic testing standards across the province."

This was brought to me on behalf of cardiology patients across the province.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this very, very short petition for you today:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty take the unfair HST off of hydro and home heating bills."

I will send it to you, Mr. Speaker, through page Kendra.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from members of my community.

"Whereas St. John the Evangelist Catholic elementary school in Weston is overcrowded, with 480 students in a school designed for 260; and

"Whereas the students will be relocating 40 minutes away in September 2012 during the duration of the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has placed St. John the Evangelist third on the urgent capital priority list for 2012," and actually it's now first, Mr. Speaker;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Respectfully request full funding to replace St. John the Evangelist school during the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; therefore, the students are not relocated twice."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and hand it over to page Gopi.

USE OF CONSERVATION RESERVES

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the proposed preliminary management statement and proposed additions for Clear Lake Conservation Reserve and Dawson Ponds and Plastic Lake Conservation Reserve, dated 9 February 2012, has been issued without consultation, is based on factual inaccuracies and would ban the existing use of this area by cross-country skiers, snowshoers, anglers and residents;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Recall the proposed management statement to correct the factual inaccuracies;

"(2) Eliminate the 45-day consultation period to allow full and fair discussion with community groups; and

"(3) Require ministry staff to engage in an open discussion with local groups to negotiate fair terms of responsible community use, including the use of groomers to allow the historical trails to continue to be accessible to community users."

I affix my signature to that and pass it to page Colin from Peterborough.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a stack of petition postcards in front of me which read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas tourism plays a vital and irreplaceable role in northwestern Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas the decision to close travel information centres in Kenora, Fort Frances and Rainy River was made without notice or consultation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately reverse the decision to close the travel information centres in Kenora, Fort Frances and Rainy River until such time when an alternate plan can be reached through consultation and discussion with members of the tourism industry, municipalities, chambers of commerce and other stakeholders across the northwest."

I proudly support this and have affixed my signature, and I will give this to page Kendra to deliver.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm very delighted today to present a petition on behalf of John Doble, who lives at 332 Mary Street West in beautiful Lindsay, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bioartificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States" of America.

I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Angela.

1550

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim McDonell: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Call on the Ontario government to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

I agree with this petition and will be signing it.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: It is with great pride that I present this petition on behalf of Mr. Dwight Graham and Ed Mack, both from Elliot Lake, who have worked to collect over 2,500 signatures. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have been paying over millions in extra charges on their hydro bills to help retire the debt. The amount collected to date as per the Auditor General's report is \$8.7 billion, but the amount owing was \$7.8 billion;

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking, where is the money being invested?

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking why this was not addressed at the time the debt was retired;

"Whereas electrical rates have increased with the new creation of green energy coming online to include solar and wind, refurbishment of nuclear plants and deregulation of Hydro One;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows to obtain answers to the following questions:

"How much of the debt remains?

"When will it be eliminated from Ontario taxpayers' hydro bills?"

I agree with this petition and I will present it to page Gopi.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's quite amazing how many of these petitions are coming in.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

"Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

"Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

"Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and

respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Annaleise.

GREY BRUCE HEALTH UNIT

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Bruce and Grey counties do not support the closure of the Walkerton office of the Grey Bruce Health Unit; and

"Whereas board of health members have not been consulted regarding the closure; and

"Whereas the Grey Bruce Health Unit administration has failed to release the cost-benefit analysis used to determine why the Walkerton office of the Grey Bruce Health Unit should be permanently closed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct the Grey Bruce Health Unit's medical officer of health to keep the Walkerton office of the health unit open and fully operational."

I understand this petition and affix my signature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over. Orders of the day.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I request five minutes of unanimous consent to let the member from Durham—

Mr. John O'Toole: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Denied. Have a seat.

Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OPERATOR ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ D'EXPLOITATION DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 12, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts/ Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité pour fusionner la Société indépendante d'exploitation du réseau d'électricité et l'Office de l'électricité de l'Ontario,

modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I hope I don't hear that "take a seat" while I'm speaking, but sometimes it's necessary, isn't it?

It's a pleasure on what is one of the last days—you know, that petition delivered by my colleague from Huron-Bruce is the last petition we're going to hear in this Legislature until we reconvene on September 10. That will be one that we can be putting in the books. This is the last one. There are no petitions tomorrow, and of course there will be no petitions on Wednesday.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to join the debate. My colleague from Nipissing, Mr. Fedeli, spoke eloquently on this bill some time ago. Of course, the government has recalled it for debate today, and it's my pleasure to join the debate. It's Bill 75, and I'll read the title if I may: An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts.

That's what the government calls this bill. I have a different title for it.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Uh-oh.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes. It should be called "An Act to deflect attention away from the absolutely deplorable mess we have made of the electricity file here in the province of Ontario and to further deflect people's attention from the scandal at Ornge; therefore, we bring in this new electricity act to try to kind of shift the attention away from other matters."

Why I say "deplorable"—actually, it is a sickening mess; it is a criminal mess that they have made of the electricity file, and I say that to the Minister of Energy while I know he's paying attention.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: You can't use the word "criminal."

Mr. John Yakabuski: Of course you can. Speaker, I just want to put it into perspective here for the purpose of the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure so it's crystal clear.

In 2003, when Dalton McGuinty came into office, you, your family and everyone else were paying 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour for electricity. Today, if you've got a smart meter, right now you're paying 11.7 cents. From 2003 to 2012, that is a staggering, mind-blowing 172% increase in your electricity here in the province of Ontario—172%. I had to say it a second time, Mr. Speaker, just for people to absorb the gravity of that. Is there anything on the revenue side in your home that has gone up 172%? I think not—certainly not in mine, and I think I could speak for the vast majority of Ontario families. So let's ask where that came from. How did we get there, 172%?

Well, it started with the birth of the OPA—or hatching. It may have been hatching, it may have been

birth; we are not sure exactly what it was. But I'll tell you, the brainchild was hatched over there. Something was hatched over there. It was a thought. They thought, "Is there any way we can relieve Ontario families of a little more of their hard-earned money? Well, you know what we could do? We could come up with a power authority. It's going to be a virtual agency. It's going to be a transitional agency of a few people." That's how they sold it here in this Legislature under Bill 100. Dwight Duncan was the Minister of Energy then.

Here's what this virtual transitional agency has become: It's now about a \$400-million boondoggle, with 235 to 250 people, and over 90 of them make over \$100,000 a year and therefore are on the sunshine list. Four are making over \$300,000, and the CEO is making close to \$600,000. So that was step one.

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But at the same time that they instituted this OPA, part of their reasoning was, "We want to be able to have a vehicle to get more money out of people's pockets, but we've got to have a way of transferring it to the pockets of our friends in the power business." So they used the OPA as that vehicle. It was also used as a shield, if you want to call it that, so that when people didn't like an energy policy coming out of this government, the Minister of Energy simply said, "We don't really get involved in that. That's the OPA."

Where I'm coming to is, what followed was, of course, the Green Energy Act. While Ornge is the biggest scandal to hit this province since Confederation, the Green Energy Act is right up there, because it was built and based on falsehoods. It was built around false pretenses. It has led to the most egregious increases in the price of electricity for Ontario families in history.

Let me put some meat on the bone there. People wonder why they're paying 172% more for electricity today than they were in 2003. If you've got a smart meter today, the price of electricity at low periods, like on the weekends, is 6.5 cents a kilowatt hour, 10 cents during the mid-peaks and 11.7 cents during peak times.

What's part of the bill now is what they call the global adjustment. It used to be called the provincial benefit, and even the Liberals couldn't keep calling it a benefit. You just can't keep putting your hand in people's pockets and taking out more until there's nothing left but lint and then convince them that they're getting a benefit. It just wasn't working, so they started to call it the global adjustment.

This month, the global adjustment is 5.34 cents a kilowatt hour. The high was in April, at 7.47 cents a kilowatt hour. Let me tell you what that means.

The wholesale price of electricity, the average market price of electricity in Ontario, since January 1, 2012, is right around two cents a kilowatt hour. You see, what has happened is, they've pretty well killed all the jobs in this province. Nobody is working. The factories are closed or closing. Capacity is still good. Yet they've, on top of that, signed all kinds of exorbitant contracts for new power, such as wind, where they pay 13.5 cents a kilo-

watt hour for whatever those wind generators produce. You know those gigantic monstrosities that are a blight on the landscape in rural Ontario? People from rural Ontario understand what they are. People from Toronto may not because they don't have them here, other than the tiddlywink one down at the CNE. Half the time, it's just being spun with an electric motor to make it look like it's producing electricity.

You see, all of those contracts that they signed with these gigantic companies, many of them multinationals, many of them American—the biggest deal is the \$7-billion boondoggle they signed with Samsung, which is going to cost—and not the Samsung here, but Samsung. That's the one that's going to cost the people in Ontario the most at the end of the day.

This global adjustment—what it is is that every time you pay for a kilowatt hour, there's a market price, which has hovered around two cents. The government has to find a way of paying for all of those contracts that they've signed with these companies. They came up with this scheme called the global adjustment. This month, for every kilowatt hour that you're paying for at home or in business, business gets it as a direct charge, and for the rest of us it's hidden in the bill. That's why it's 11.7 and 10 cents a kilowatt hour for anything that's not on off-peak times. So the business then gets a bill that says, "This is the amount of power you used and this is the cost of the global adjustment," because we've got to be able to pay for those gigantic contracts that are excessive and exorbitant by anybody's standards.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, then we have the issue of—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Could I ask the government, if they want to talk loudly, to take it outside. If you want to whisper, that's fine, but it's a little loud. I'm having trouble hearing him.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Or resign.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And I could do without those comments too.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the folks over there, if they want to learn something, they should listen. If they want to get the propaganda from the Minister of Energy, they should pay no attention here and just get the government gobbledygook.

The contracts that they've signed with these gigantic wind developers also guarantee that we will buy the electricity, whenever it is produced, at those huge prices—as I said, 13.5 cents—regardless of whether we need it or not. So if Ontario's demand is low, which is the case at night or on weekends—very low—we still buy all that power and we pay them 13.5 cents when the market price sometimes dips below zero, where it's actually in the negative. But we still pay, as a result of the decisions of this government, 13.5 cents for that power that's being produced. Is that crazy or what? But that's the way it is under Dalton McGuinty and his Feed-in Tariff program.

Further, we have a problem then: We have to get rid of that electricity, because the system is designed so that

you cannot produce more electricity than you can use at any given time. When you produce a surplus, you have to find a place to put it. For us, in those slow times, in those times when we don't have a large demand, it tends to be New York or Quebec or some other jurisdiction. Here's the best part of it, Mr. Speaker: During the spring, when demand is low, because the air conditioners haven't come on yet, the heating is over and you have a time at night when there's no demand, we're in a situation where we're actually paying Quebec, of all places, with their massive hydroelectric capacity, to take our surplus electricity, paying them because there's no use for it here but the wind generators keep generating, because the wind blows sometimes more consistently at night. So we have to buy it from them, pay exorbitant prices and give it away or actually pay Quebec to take it.

Here's what it amounted to. The auditor, in his report, said—and this is \$1.8 billion. This is eHealth electricity. This is e-Health. It's another boondoggle, another scandal. Since 2005, Mr. Speaker—don't take my word for it. Here's what Jim McCarter, the Auditor General said: "Based on our analysis of net exports ... we estimated that from 2005 to the end of our audit in 2011"—so it will have gotten worse by now—"Ontario received \$1.8 billion less for its electricity ... than what it actually cost electricity ratepayers of Ontario." So you out there paying your hydro bills have paid \$1.8 billion more for electricity than Ontario sold it for elsewhere. Again, is that crazy or what?

They don't really want to talk about the mess that is the electricity system here in the province of Ontario, but we do. Our party released *Paths to Prosperity: Affordable Energy*, a white paper that is a basis for significant and real discussion about where Ontario needs to go in order to have a safe, sustainable, affordable supply of electricity long term here in the province of Ontario, not these crazy, cockamamie ideas that you pay somebody eight, 10 times what it's worth just to—the subsidies of this FIT program, Mr. Speaker; think about it.

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These guys go on and talk about how they need to be responsible, so they talk about the deal with horse racing tracks, the horse racing industry in Ontario. They signed an agreement in 1998 to share revenue with the tracks. It was a win-win situation. The government brings in over a billion dollars net revenue a year.

Here we have an electricity system of \$1.8-billion net loss in the trading of electricity since 2005. Why? Because there are billions being paid out to subsidize an unsustainable, failing program that will never amount to anything but a boondoggle here in the province of Ontario. But they cannot admit that they're wrong because they're Liberals. If they could, we wouldn't be talking about Ornge every day in this House because they would have admitted it was a colossal, egregious mistake, a colossal, egregious breach of trust on the people of the province of Ontario. The minister would have resigned. We would have begun to clean up that mess. They cannot do it. They will not do it.

Just think of the different standards that others were held to. My friend Bob Runciman, now the Honourable Bob Runciman, senator of Canada, uttered—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member might want to stick to Bill 75. He's drifting.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes, thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm speaking of electricity. One of the harshest critics of the electricity policy in the province of Ontario was my former colleague, now the Honourable Senator Bob Runciman. Now, you will recall Bob Runciman. I think to speak of a member of this Legislature, or a former member, is always, I would hope, in order; that we have that much respect for people who sat in this House.

Bob Runciman was a cabinet minister in a former government and he inadvertently uttered the name of a private citizen, a youth. One slip of the tongue and Mr. Runciman had the honour and decency to resign his cabinet post. Boy, hearken back to the days of honour. One slip of the tongue and that man resigned his post. That used to be the way things were in the province of Ontario. But you know what? There used to be an electricity policy in the province of Ontario that was bent on trying to offer affordable, safe, sustainable power to the people of the province of Ontario, not subsidizing those you want to ensure are going to be there when the cheques are written near election time.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: And we need affordable energy to get jobs brought back in to this province.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs as a result of not just the energy policy—we understand—all of the policies of this government, including their economic policies and their taxation policies etc. One of the significant nails in the coffin of manufacturers in this province has been the energy policy of this government. The energy policies of this government have costs hundreds of thousands of jobs. If the brakes aren't put on, it is an absolute Armageddon that they're facing. They are speeding down the tunnel and a freight train is coming the other way.

Mr. Speaker, they don't get it. Somehow they have to admit they're wrong and reverse this course that they're going on. It is destructive for the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I always enjoy listening to my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. He started off quite on the button, on the topic, to talk about the bill. This bill proposes to shield the government from some of its inadequacies when it comes to our energy system and the delivery and production of hydro in this province. What he neglected to touch on were any of the significantly historic events that happened under the previous government prior to the Liberals coming into power, which really set the stage for the disasters and boondoggles that we see within our power generation system and distribution system today.

A massive exercise in privatization that they now rail against in terms of the windmills—and I agree. Those

things are massive power plants, private power plants, given to private corporations. As the member mentioned, in many instances they are multinationals. But that's the ideology that governs the Conservative Party's outlook on power generation. It has been adopted, at least under the Green Energy Act, by the Liberals.

I will also point to the fact—and maybe the Minister of Energy can validate this for me—that the precursor to the Green Energy Act was the Standard Offer Program. Minister, can you validate that? That was devised by Mike Harris. That plan was in place by Mr. Harris, Mr. Eves, and then ultimately repackaged, rebranded as the Green Energy Act, and adopted by the Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have listened very carefully to the comments made by the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke on Bill 75. Let me say this: If we were to lose the immunity that this House offers its members, we wouldn't hear 1% of the things that we hear in this House. It is very unfortunate, Speaker, that we are allowed to say practically whatever we want, and the public does not benefit from what they see or hear, what's coming out of this chamber. Most of the time it is incorrect information, half-truths, the wrong things.

Let me go back to some of the comments that we have heard, scams in hydro and what have you. I remember the Harris-Eves times. I was sitting on that side of the House. I remember when the biggest scam in the history of the province of Ontario was gifted away—gifted away, the 407 highway. It was given away. It was not sold. Do we remember those years?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, folks. I hear we've had a rough day here. I missed it this morning. It ends here, the yelling across. If you want to talk, go outside and talk. If you want to talk quietly and gently, no problem. But I don't want yelling across. No more. Last warning.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you, Speaker. I am addressing hydro issues and Bill 75. I remember that past government—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

The member from Nepean-Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise and to support my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, who was, for the majority of the time since I've served here, the energy critic for the Ontario PC caucus, and, I might add, one of the finest energy critics I've ever come across. He held his own in a very important file in this province, particularly at a time when this government ushered in probably the biggest scam in Canadian history, the Green Energy Act, which has soaked rural Ontario families, small businesses, seniors and farmers to the tune of millions upon millions of dollars. I must say the biggest scam came in that Green Energy Act in the form of a \$7-billion untendered contract to Samsung.

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If that member across wants to talk about scams, I can one-up him on the 407 with the Green Energy Act. I can add eHealth. And of course, let's not forget my favourite: Ornge.

This is a government that has lost its way. You only have to look at the OPA sunshine list, as my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke mentioned during his remarks. This year, 91 OPA employees made over \$100,000 a year, compared to just 75 last year. Four are making over \$300,000, and the CEO, Colin Andersen, is making \$573,000 a year. The average salary at that commission, that agency, is \$152,000—more than almost anyone in this chamber makes. For what? To market the scandals and the scams and the rip-offs that this government has come up with.

That's why my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is speaking on behalf of the people who don't sit in this chamber and who can't speak for themselves in it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Essex.

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Can't have two hits, eh?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Apparently not.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Don't fault me for trying, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Nice try.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm a pinch-hitter for the member from Essex today.

I would like to comment on the comments from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. His comments, to start, focused on the bill and on energy, and as it got on in the comments from the other players, it seems we started hurling who could come up with the biggest scandal.

As far as fire sales, I'd like to throw the ONTC in there, because that's going to be a big fire sale that's happening right now. I know, Mr. Speaker, it hasn't got a lot to do with energy, but it is a big fire sale.

One of the things about energy that I didn't hear the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke talk about is not only sometimes do we give power away to Quebec, but sometimes, and this happens in my riding, we've had plants close down because hydro is too expensive. There are times when we let the water go over the dams because we don't know what to do with the hydro. There are specific times of the season where we actually make the turbines turn backwards with compressed air to use up our power.

I'm not a power expert. I'm not the energy critic. But I do know that if you're wearing out your equipment to burn your own hydro, something went wrong in the planning process. It would be nice if we actually could all get together and see what's going wrong.

I would like to comment on the program that was announced that there would be some energy relief for

companies. That energy relief has been in place in northern Ontario for a while, or a version of it, and I think that it's a good idea for that to be brought across the province. All companies that create jobs should have a break and should have competitive energy prices.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the members from Essex, York West, Nepean–Carleton and Timiskaming–Cochrane on my address today on Bill 75. It certainly seemed to raise the ire of the member from York West. I can only say to the member, what used to be said years ago when somebody was getting to somebody and they would get upset; they would just say, "Well, you know, the truth hurts."

The mess that this government has made of energy policy is a scandal. Anything I said in this chamber today, I would be more than happy to repeat outside the chamber. I have on many occasions talked about the rip-off and the sinful crime that you have perpetrated against the people of Ontario with your green energy policy in this government—an absolute sin, an absolute shame. Grandmothers can't afford to pay their hydro bills because of what Dalton McGuinty has done to them. It's a shame about what they have done in order to line the pockets of their friends in the energy business—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): To the member, that's a bit of a stretch. Would you retract that last statement?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I'd be glad to say that one outside because everybody knows it's the truth. The people in the business know it's the truth, too, because that is what has happened here, and it's not direct subsidy from government—no. It's easy to do because it goes directly on the hydro bill of people, consumers in this province. It doesn't come off the revenue and income statement of the government. No, it goes directly on the hydro bill of the people of the province of Ontario. That is the scandal, that is the crime, and this bill today is nothing but an attempt to deflect away from that. They should be ashamed of themselves over there. It's time to reverse this policy—an absolute disgrace.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate. The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: All right; I got my time back here. I didn't need that extra two minutes, but thank you.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to join the debate today, and pleased to hear some passionate commentary from members around the House today, because it is an important issue. We're talking about one of the more fundamental aspects of our economy: the ability of our province to generate power and distribute it to consumers, businesses and constituents, members of our community.

But we've been doing this for a long time in this province, some 100 years, ever since we figured out how to produce hydro—and we call it "hydro" because when

we first started, it was derived from hydroelectric dams. It's something that sort of makes us uniquely Canadian, that we call it hydro here. In the States, they call it power, electricity; in other jurisdictions they call it whatever they do. But we call it specifically hydro here because there was a time in this province that that's where we got all our energy from: hydroelectric dams that turned those turbines and fed that power through the grid to small communities. But they did it in a specific way. They did it as a public good, as an entity derived from the province to the people for their benefit.

Now, we all paid into the system, we all paid for the system, and for a very long time that system worked incredibly well. It paid for upgrades. It paid for the distribution. It paid for the workers, the linemen—the line-people. It paid for the continuation of the system and the expansion of the system.

I'll note that the forefather of the NDP, Brother Tommy Douglas, electrified—not only did he electrify people in the province of Saskatchewan, but he also brought electricity, public power, to all points in Saskatchewan under the CCF government.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Didn't he think that was the single most important thing he ever did?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It was one of the single most important things. Thank you, to the honourable Minister of Agriculture. It was one of the best things—as well as bringing in our public health care system, universal health care system, and our public—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): If the minister wants to go down memory lane, he might want to talk outside instead of yelling across the floor. Thanks very much.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I was just so impressed—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): By the way, if you want to say anything, you go through me.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks very much. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And the member from Essex should sit down when I stand up.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Are you up? Down? Okay. We've done it so many times today. I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

I don't mind going down memory lane when it comes to talking about some of the achievements of New Democrat governments across the country in different jurisdictions, and I don't mind pointing to those good pieces of public policy that led to the betterment of the constituents that we represented in those various provinces.

Back to the issue at hand: Public power was a method and a system that was implemented for the good of the people—not for profit, essentially. We didn't have multinationals that were infusing their profit-driven agendas into the regime. They were purposely excluded

because we knew it was too important to tamper with and too important to mess up.

But, lo and behold, as we go through the 1980s and massive nuclear power projects come online, costly initiatives that were sort of the be-all and end-all at that day—you know, clean, limitless power with a shelf life of tens of thousands of years in terms of radioactive material—everybody jumped on the nuclear bandwagon. We saw it as the saviour to our economic and energy woes at the time.

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Nobody told us, nobody was out front with the massive costs and overruns that these systems were going to burden us with, and to date we still pay for a large majority of those upgrades to our nuclear system.

I would point to one, being Darlington. Darlington was started by the Tories, completed by the Liberals, and then we landed on it in the 1990s at a cost just around \$14 billion—in 1990.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Actually, the NDP finished it.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We did finish it, because it was already done. You know, you guys had already signed the cheques and given it away. What were we to do?

What this government has proven is that they will not shy away from decommissioning a plant, as we saw in Oakville, that was fully constructed, ready to go, ready to flip the switch to start to produce power through gasification. Yet, for a seat-saving exercise, they cancelled the project, decommissioned it, and we are going to be stuck, on the hook, for \$1 billion because of a failed policy and a failed initiative—failed because they failed to consult with the people in that area. They didn't talk to anyone. The community was fully against the project, yet the powers that be, that saw that they were going to make—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Chair, we don't have a quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll ask the clerks' table to check for a quorum, please.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. I hope that more members come in to hear this invigorating speech, obviously.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I do too. That's why I called for a quorum.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much.

Where was I? Could someone remind me of where I was?

Oh, yeah, we were in Oakville, at the cancellation of a gas-fired plant that's going to ultimately cost us a billion dollars. Why did they cancel it? Well, they had to back-track on this program, on this planned gas plant, because they did not consult with the residents of that city and the communities that were to be affected.

You would think that they would learn from the mistake here. Not only is it going to cost us \$1 billion, but it has obviously put another black mark on their ability to manage our electrical system here.

That brings me to, obviously, the bill that is before us today. It's G75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act. What it proposes to do is meld two of the five entities that were derived by the Harris privatization plan. What we have are the OPA, the OPG, Hydro One, OEB and the IESO. What it proposes to do is to amend the Electricity Act to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator—the IESO—and the Ontario Power Authority—the OPA—into one non-share capital corporation called the Ontario Electricity System Operator. So we'll have another acronym—I'm going to write that one down—OESO. We almost have every letter in the alphabet here for our electricity system. We're missing a couple of Zs. But here we are—it's a blending, something that New Democrats, in general, are supportive of.

We have long advocated for the amalgamation back to a single entity that could generate, produce, distribute and maintain our electrical system here in the province. So you're going to take two of these, with a cost savings I have seen of roughly around \$25 million. There would be an estimated savings of \$25 million—just a fraction, a sliver, of what was vaporized. That's the only thing that went up in smoke with this gas plant in Oakville: a billion dollars vaporized. We're going to get \$25 million back in savings. We'll see how far that goes. I don't think it will go that far to saving the consumers, the businesses, small businesses, manufacturing centres and residents of our various ridings—it won't save them very much at the end of the day on their hydro bill.

There's another provision to this bill that we are concerned about. I talked about Oakville and Mississauga, where there was no consultation. You had to backpedal; you've blown a billion dollars. What you're doing now is taking away the OPA's power and duty to develop an integrated power system plan, the IPSP, for approval by the Ontario Energy Board, and the OEB's power and duty to review that plan for economic prudence, cost-effectiveness and regulatory compliance.

The IPSP is replaced by ministerial energy plans. The minister must consult with the OEB on the impact of the energy plan on consumers' electricity bills and on methods of managing that impact. The minister must also refer the plan to the OEB for review of the estimated capital costs in the plan in accordance with the referral.

What it does do—that's a lot of words mixed together there—is it eliminates the public review procedure, where the public has the ability to talk about and ask questions about these transformations in our system and any initiatives going forward. Any new generation initiatives, any changes in policy—those are all by ministerial decree.

That might sound good on that side of the House, being in government. Some of you may, in fact, look to be the Minister of Energy someday. You may aspire to be that and hope that you have this power at the tip of your

fingertips. We, on this side, particularly New Democrats, are frightened by that, and so are stakeholders in the environmental realm and also those who understand the real pitfalls of privatization and consolidating our system under one single ministerial provision, where just one minister makes these decisions. It's unaccountable, not transparent and hidden from the purview of the public. It's frightening stuff.

Imagine, Minister of Agriculture: Let's say six months down the road we get into an election, hypothetically speaking; let's say, spring of next year. Let's say, April 20 of next year. Let's just pick that one out of the hat. Let's say the Liberal Party loses the election. Let's say, hypothetically, you're reduced to third party status—hypothetically. Let's say that Bob Rae is your new leader too. We can say that hypothetically. Why not? Let's say that someone in the PC caucus becomes the new Minister of Energy. Now you've given them *carte blanche* to make these amendments that we already know—I gave you the cautionary tale of what happened under Ernie Eves and Mike Harris. They had an agenda. The only difference between their agenda and what you're doing here is that theirs was not hidden. It was clearly articulated.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: You were in government, then, when it happened.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Absolutely not. It was absolutely clear to us that they wanted to deregulate, privatize, open the system to the market and dismantle the public power regime that we had in this province for nearly 100 years up until they got their hands on it. What you're going to do is you're going to open the doors to them being able to do that again, under any regime. That's the way we read it here. Don't take my word for it; take the word of many of our stakeholders whom we individually meet with who are concerned about this provision as well.

It's similar to what you've done under schedule 28 in the budget bill that opens the doors to privatization of all ministries and of all ministerial services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We heard you on that. We changed it.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: This is another one that you should change, too, as well.

We understand on this side of the House, as New Democrats, that we need some consolidation. We've advocated for that for quite some time. But hidden within the context of this one is the ability to give the minister outright *carte blanche* without any public input and without any oversight—something we need to address.

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I'd just like to get to, for example, what's happening in my riding of Essex. Many of you know I come from southwestern Ontario, the manufacturing heartland of Ontario. We were and have been the economic engine of the province. I say "economic engine" because any mechanical engineer will tell you that an engine is a combustion mechanism. It's a combustion system. They call Detroit the Motor City, but motors are electric.

Wouldn't it be great if we could get to that, where we were and I think we are?

We need to have a government that actually is doing it for the right reasons, for the public good, under that lens, and working with our automotive companies to bring those new systems about, not for the sheer politics of it.

We call it greenwashing. I think that that's what the Green Energy Act actually was. It was a massive exercise in timing—it was good timing, because at that point we were just prior to the recession. I agree that transitioning our energy system to a new, green-focused energy system is a good way, and it was a good way to also stimulate. But the way in which it was done—I think there have been changes to it. I know that there have been some changes to the Green Energy Act. The way in which it was done, by opening up the Green Energy Act to the massive capital, corporate interests that were the only ones that had the money to make those investments—we're talking about the Enbridges and the huge power companies, many of whom are involved in other areas of energy production, oil and gas, across the country. Those guys, and the Samsungs, were the only ones that had the money to infuse into the huge systems—solar panels, solar firms, as well as the wind turbines.

There has been minimal economic impact in terms of regional development, minimal in the sense that some farmers have benefited, some have lost. Municipalities, by and large, have not capitalized as much as they could have, given a different system, given a system that actually took their priorities and interests first and foremost. How do we develop a system that benefits regional municipalities, co-operatives and groups, instead of singular entities like the massive corporations that we see that dominate the new Green Energy Act? Those are the ones that are benefiting from it. I understand the concept: You wanted to jump-start it. But you created a gold rush that actually created a disaster.

I will not agree with the Tories in the sense that they will point to the Green Energy Act as being the major point of cost increase on our utilities, on our electricity bill. It's not right; it's false. That argument is false. The major costs are the ones that we're still paying for, the massive exercises in nuclear production and nuclear energy; the deregulation of our industry. As I said, if you want to talk about the Green Energy Act, the precursor to it, the baby, was created by Mike Harris under the standard offer program. He had the same idea as the Green Energy Act: "Let's get private industry involved. We'll let them bid on these contracts. We'll contract out the power to them. They can make all the profit, and we'll wash our hands of it." That's just the simplest explanation for it.

It delegitimizes the argument that we hear on green energy. It could have been done in a different way. I've seen many examples. There are many jurisdictions that actually have done this right and have maintained a public system and maintained the accountability and transparency within their system. Typically, those are the more progressive, developed, First World countries. But

actually, Third World countries are getting on board with public power and actually developing co-operative models that bring in green energy technologies and allow them to be self-sustainable, for the benefit, for the good, of their communities, not for massive profit-driven motives.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time to add my comments to the debate. As I said, G75 does one thing right, by blending the IESO with the OPA. We think that could result in some efficiencies.

But it does another thing massively wrong, which is shielding the government from oversight and transparency by giving the minister purview by ministerial decree, ministerial directive, for any new generation deals within our energy sector. Energy plans—it says the minister must consult with the OEB. He'll consult with the OEB, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the public will have any input as to what those systems will be going forward.

I appreciate the time, as I said, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry I didn't acknowledge you when you were standing up. I will never do that again; I promise.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Never say never.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I will never do that in the 14 seconds remaining in this 20-minute speech. I am not going to do that again. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did take the opportunity to listen intently to the remarks made by my colleague the member from Essex.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You guys weren't even here. We had to call for quorum.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Indeed, I was able to listen to the speech in a couple of venues, so I did listen to it very carefully.

Bill 75: I think the member addressed a number of key concerns. The fact is this bill is at second reading; it will be going to the committee in the not-too-distant future, an opportunity to hear from many of the stakeholders in Ontario's electricity system come forward and provide their viewpoints. One of the strengths of a minority government is an opportunity to amend the bill, and no doubt Bill 75 will be amended before it comes back to this House for third reading.

We've been pretty clear: We'll keep Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One in the public's hands, as they should be, representing in excess of 75% of activity in Ontario's electricity sector. But I want to remind people that the Harris-Eves government proposed what I would call the grand scheme. They broke up the old Ontario Hydro into three distinct areas: Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One, and they very interestingly, Mr. Speaker, transferred all the debt to the new Ontario Hydro Financial Corp. They did that for one reason, and one reason only: to make sure the two other entities would be free of debt so that they could be sold. Interesting entities like Credit Suisse might have been inter-

ested in acquiring those assets, or other capital companies around the world, so that was done. Of course, that was done to facilitate privatization, which we'll never look at.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the comments that my colleague from Essex shared. They were very reflective; and it's an interesting perspective, always, to hear from our NDP colleagues.

But I have to point out today that when we talk about nuclear power, we have to recognize that today it's the most reliable, affordable source of energy for consumers and industry alike here in Ontario. It produces 57% of our power, and our good folks in Ontario, as well as our industries, benefit from that reliable, affordable energy. That is where we need to get back to.

Bill 75, unfortunately, is just smoke and mirrors to hide the fact that we have a real crisis in our province today. We have to get to the crux of it. That is the fact that, just like our colleague from Essex commented on failed policy, the crux of the matter is the most paramount failed policy in my tenure to date that we've spoken about has to be green energy. The Green Energy Act just isn't working, and it's the epitome of failed policy. I can't stress that enough.

If you were to come into my riding of Huron—Bruce and see the countryside pocked with towers and see communities ripped apart and see municipalities struggling over the loss of their voice on such an important issue, everyone visiting my riding would agree that the Green Energy Act has been a dismal failure.

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We have to also take a look at where we need to go. That's why I really am proud of the direction that our PC Party in Ontario is taking. We've taken time to talk to stakeholders; we've talked to individuals in terms of what they need. Our white paper, *Paths to Prosperity*, has certainly captured the vision that we need to get back to prosperity in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: In general, this is a step in the right direction, and I think that's a repeated message that you're going to hear from many of my colleagues here in our party.

I just wanted to comment on a few of the points that were raised by my Conservative friend across the way—her riding eludes me. I've got too much paper to dig under—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Huron—Bruce.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Huron—Bruce. Thank you very much.

If we're going to throw numbers out there, 45% of today's hydro bills are directly attributed to the refurbishment of nuclear plants—45%. That's where your hydro bill is going. That's a staggering number. This is where the Conservative Party wants to go—in that direction—going forward. I don't hear that the Liberal govern-

ment is not going in that direction either. So let's make that clear.

I believe where we need to go and where we're starting to take that path is, we're going down through a green energy path. I enjoy some of the moves that were made. I like some of the initiatives that were made by the Liberal government, but how they got to where they are today could have been easily and vastly improved. The green energy, which is on our hydro bills today, actually contributes 6% to 8% of the total bill, compared to the 45% due to the refurbishment of nuclear plants. So really, let's look at those numbers before we make a decision as far as where we're going to go in the future.

Interjection: Great union jobs.

Mr. Michael Mantha: You're absolutely right; they're great union jobs. There is a transition period where we can look, there are options in Ontario, where we can move to greener pastures. Those individuals—I'm one who actually transitioned from the forestry sector to the mining sector. There is no reason why we can't grab that same workforce and transition them into green energy jobs going forward. There's no reason why that can't happen, and I'm going to love talking to that at a future date.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I was very impressed with the words so eloquently spoken by my colleague from Essex. Tommy Douglas was a very good friend of mine. You sounded almost Douglasish over there; it was very good. Tommy and I used to chat for hours about some of the things he was engaged in. He often said that he felt the single most important thing that he did in Saskatchewan was in fact to electrify the province. He electrified us all in many ways, to his—rest his soul—everlasting credit.

I thought the remarks from the other side were very fair and balanced, and that's good. I thought there was a general recognition of the importance of green energy. I want to tell you, if Tommy Douglas were standing in this House today, he'd be applauding the Green Energy Act. He'd be raising some of the same concerns that the member from Essex raised, but he'd be talking about nukes; he'd be talking about, perhaps, moving in some other directions; but he'd be saying something else—and I say this respectfully and I raise this as an offer.

Tommy used to always say, "If you want to predict your future, you have to create it." I like the co-operative model; I like the community power model. I don't think there's enough reaching across the floor and working together to develop some of those co-operative community-based possibilities. I'd like to see us work together on that. We have a lot in common, you and I, I think. I'd be quite prepared to sit down with you over coffee; I'll even buy lunch, and we'll talk about some of the ways we can work together.

I was pleased with the comments that were made, and I appreciate them being said here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before the member from Essex has his two-minute response, I'd like

to thank him for his genuine, heartfelt apology for standing up. Thanks.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm really good at the apologies, Mr. Speaker, as my wife will attest to. I've had lots of practice. But it was heartfelt and I learn something every day.

Thank you to the members from Peterborough, Huron-Bruce, Algoma-Manitowish, and, of course, the Minister of Agriculture.

It is so complex. It's interesting; it's important. I talk of course of our energy system as a whole, and it's gone through many connotations over the years and it will go through more after we're all gone from this House. Hopefully, it will go into a greener future with technologies that we can't even fathom today, technologies that are clean and affordable and are actually a net benefit, but unfortunately we're not there today.

What I think the system could use the most of, the absolute most, isn't more nukes, isn't more wind turbines, isn't more solar panels or hydro or gas plants or more money or less money. What the system needs today is transparency, it needs truth, and it needs public input and dialogue, more so than it ever has, because we've gone through—no pun intended—a dark era in our hydro system.

People are frustrated. They want to know what green energy is about. They want to know what a Samsung contract means to them. How does it benefit them? How does it benefit the province? They want to know, and they need to know. That's a major contention with this Bill 75, that it eliminates that. It backs that public oversight even further away from them. It's not the right direction to go, and it's one that I think Tommy would speak about, to bring that to the forefront: the ability to present our ideas and to present them truthfully, honestly and under full scrutiny of the public.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's my pleasure to stand up today and speak on Bill 75. It has a long title. I don't know if I want to read it, but basically it has to do with improving energy in Ontario, more efficiencies in Ontario.

I'm going to start with a little story. I was in southern California, just outside of Palm Springs. It was probably about 20 years ago I was there, and I remember seeing windmills for the first time—not one but thousands of windmills. I thought to myself, what are these windmills doing here?

Lo and behold, here we are today, debating about energy. We're not talking about coal. We're not talking about the old way of burning wood. We're talking about new technologies, and we have to move in that direction because if we use coal, it's dirty. If we use similar things—I don't mean to offend the PCs, but they relied heavily on coal when they were in power, and coal produces by-products in the air, especially—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Folks, we have six sidebars going on, and I'm trying to listen to

your member. So I'd appreciate it, if you want to have discussions, that you might want to go out to the lobby and do it.

Interjection: Then we don't have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, that's your problem, if you don't have the people here. It's not my problem. All right? So, please, could you cut it back a little bit? Thanks.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was talking about the use of coal, and I'll get into that more in a few minutes. But the overall purpose of this legislation in front of us today is to make sure that the people of Ontario have reliable, clean jobs supporting and producing affordable energy.

As I was saying, before October 2003, we had brownouts, shortages of electricity and of power. We saw production of energy go down, but the demand for electricity go up. So if you have a basic—I'm not trying to use a prop, but you have a graph, and on one side, up and down, you have production, and at the bottom you have demand. There are two curves. The demand curve went up higher and higher over the years. Meanwhile, the production curve went lower and lower and lower. That's not a good curve to have, because at some point in time the demand got higher than the production.

I remember hearing on the radio and on television warnings saying that "There may be a brownout today" or "There may be a shutdown of power for a few hours," especially in the summertime when people had their air conditioners running, when they would come home from work and start cooking at 5:30 or 6 o'clock. It was a possibility. We were warned there was a possibility that there could be a brownout or a blackout.

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Since the Liberals got into power, we don't hear those announcements anymore. We don't hear every year, especially in the summertime, around this time of year, in June and July, in the past few summers—we haven't heard, "Lower your air conditioning, cook later on or earlier in the day, because if everyone is doing it at the same time, there will be a blackout or a burnout."

So we began to improve things. We still have increased demand, but we have also increased production, and we've done it in a clean way. We've done it by doing a number of things that help reach the demand that's required but, at the same time, produce clean energy.

Clean energy: I'm talking about hydro, for example, the waterfalls, Niagara Falls—we now have more turbines down there than before; we have solar panels in a lot of locations; natural gas, which is lower on emissions but still produces significant amounts of energy; and wind. Wind, as I was talking about earlier, can produce a significant amount of energy.

When I was in California and I saw those windmills—as I said, not hundreds but thousands of them—I realized at that time that wind was a good alternative, because all you're doing is tapping out resources that already exist here and around the world. You have wind everywhere, so you tap into that resource—the Dutch were doing it

centuries ago—and create a windmill which produces energy. The Dutch were using it to grind certain things or used their plants to be able to reduce the size and create smaller portions that could be eaten or fed to certain animals, especially domestic animals.

Wind has become popular, not just in California, not here in Ontario, but also in other places. So, besides California and Ontario, we have it in Denmark. We've seen some huge windmills, some even out into the sea. I saw it recently. I was in Europe. I saw it in Italy. They have windmills, but they have a lot of solar panels, because in Italy, the sun comes out pretty well every day, at least when I've been there. It comes out, and so the panels start producing energy.

These are all clean sources. We're focusing on that, and this bill in front of us helps to simplify all the different rules that are in place, simplify them so that we don't have duplication, but also so we can continue to produce energy in a clean and efficient manner.

I want to talk about coal before I move on. Besides coal causing problems in our atmosphere—when the Conservative government was burning coal, we had a lot of problems with asthma days or smog days. I certainly remember these days. Seniors and even young children were warned to stay indoors because the smog was so powerful, especially here in Toronto. It was so bad that they had to issue a warning, saying, "Today's a smog day. Stay inside. Put your air conditioner on so you don't inhale all the pollutants that come from coal." As a result, some people who had asthma suffered quite a bit.

So we phased out, shut down or reduced the use of coal by 90%, which is significant, and we created more clean and efficient energy: nuclear, hydro—as I mentioned earlier—solar, wind and natural gas. It's not that we want to move in that direction; we must move in that direction. We can't be depleting our natural resources here and trying to use the simple way of burning coal.

In England, during the Industrial Revolution, the skies got so dirty—I remember reading about it in a Charles Dickens novel and several other novels that were written back in the 19th century—that they would describe how bad cities like Manchester in the north and other northern cities in England would be. It would basically be dark during the day. The sun couldn't shine through because there were so many pollutants in the sky caused by coal.

We can't use that. We have to reduce that and move in the other direction more and more. And it's difficult. Government always has red tape. We have various acts in front of us, different boards in front of us, regarding energy that make things more complicated. We're trying to simplify the process. We want to make it easier for entities out there to produce energy, mostly clean energy, and continue to focus in that direction.

Who knows? Ten years from now, with the Green Energy Act in place, with various pieces of legislation in place, perhaps we can rely 100% on clean energy and continue to phase out the last 10% of coal and other sources that are not as clean.

I think it was just a few days ago that I read that smog can be so bad that it can be bad for people's health. There

was something in the news this morning—I forget which paper it was in, but basically it said that it could actually cause cancer. They've discovered now that smog can cause cancer. So you cannot continue to move in that direction. Especially smog generated from diesel—diesel engines and the by-products they produce are extremely bad for one's health. You have to move in a different direction.

I'm not going to reread the minister's speech. He outlined this very well. The minister outlined very well what the bill was about and made a lot of good remarks. I'm not going to go through that. Rather, I'd like to focus on the overall purpose of this bill and certain sections that I'm concerned about.

Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, 2012—I guess it's the best name for it—was introduced in April of this year. It would amalgamate two of Ontario's electricity agencies, the Independent Electricity System Operator, IESO, which is the system operator, and the Ontario Power Authority, which is the system planner. We'd bring them together and they'd start working together and try to improve the overall system of energy. I wanted to focus on that.

I think I mentioned—if I didn't, I apologize—that I was going to share my time, and I want to share my time with the member from York West.

In closing, the bill is very important to all of us. It affects every single one of us and the way we breathe and the way that we function in Ontario every day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to have a few minutes on Bill 75. Bill 75 is an important bill, introduced by the minister to make some changes to our agencies, these very important agencies—the so-called hydro.

It's quite right that every time we tend to make some changes, there is some apprehension. I don't have to tell you the importance that hydro occupies in our province, in our daily life, in our economy. It affects everyone and everywhere. Our economy, our industries, cannot function without hydro. Our homes cannot operate without hydro. Of course, we all have to pay for that, for this particular service. But it's there. It is there, Speaker.

I believe that there is no government that wants to bring some changes to such an important agency as hydro knowing that something is going to go wrong. I think that it's a normal apprehension that we have, as the public, and even as politicians, and sometimes for good reasons as well. But deep down, I believe, Speaker, that there's no government at any particular time that wants to bring some things, some changes, that later on they will regret. I think they all have good intentions.

Depending on the times—I mean, we cannot look at 20, 30, 40 years ago, when coal was the order of the day in providing electricity, because still today it's the cheapest power but it's not the best; it's not the cleanest. Then, of course, we move on to later years and we'll see that everybody wants this clean energy, so we are moving in that direction. We have looked at the Euro-

peans, for example; they were well ahead of us, eons ahead of us, with solar panels, solar energy, wind turbines and all kinds. So we figured, "Okay, let's move in that direction."

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Everyone wants clean energy. We know our youngsters, especially those affected by asthma, love clean energy. Who doesn't? Who doesn't want to breathe easier and cleaner, Mr. Speaker?

But it's expensive. It's more expensive. As we're finding out, some of the other provisions, such as wind turbines and solar panels, are not that cheap as well. They were expensive as well. But let me say that unless we move on and bring some changes—and let me say again the energy, hydro, is one of the most important and largest agencies that we have. But at the same time, Speaker, even though we may have apprehensions, unless we move on—and hopefully we get it right, okay? We cannot live in the past or the present. Otherwise we're going to miss the future, JFK once said.

The thing is that we are here to debate Bill 75, exactly to see that we're going to get it right. I hope that we can move this bill out of this House. I think tomorrow or next week we're going to be adjourning, if you will, for the so-called summer, even though there is committee work going all over the place. We hope that by September or October, when we come back, we can bring a different bill, if you will, that will incorporate a lot of the ideas that we may be hearing from the various industries, individuals, organizations, entrepreneurs and our fellow politicians on the other side. I certainly hope that when it comes back, it will come back in such a form that everyone can say that it's a better bill, it's a good bill, it's something that should be done, and we should move on with it; because, as I said, I believe the minister has introduced this particular bill with good intentions, with fully the intention to have something better than what we have now.

I have to say, because I have been here a few years—on June 8, I celebrated 17 years in this House here—I have seen a couple of government changes, if you will. There was apprehension when my former colleagues Premier Mike Harris and Premier Ernie Eves were saying, "We're going to split hydro and we're going to sell it. We're going to do it in three or four pieces and we're going to sell it." Luckily, I'm glad that they saw the light and they didn't do it. The only thing they did was clean up, refurbish it, and sell the Bruce nuclear plant to an English firm, I believe. But that was it. They realized in time that it was not in the best interests of Ontarians to do whatever they wanted to do—split it in so many ways and start to sell the individual parts.

So what do we have today? I think we all realize the necessity and importance of hydro to be and to remain in public hands. We hope it's going to be done, and I believe that this independent review that's under way, combined with the public hearings, indeed will bring forth some things back into the House, through the various consultation and committee, something where we

really say, "We can support this. This is something good for us. It's going to be good for the economy."

Speaking of economy and jobs, I think a couple days ago the minister introduced a new program. I don't have the details, unfortunately, but I know it has got to do with some hydro rate reductions. If people, companies and individuals were to establish a large—some things that will provide jobs, if you will, Speaker, an investment of some \$250 million, I believe, and they would be gaining a lower rate. And why not? I think it's part of doing two things. One is to say, "Okay, you create jobs? We want to help you at the same time." I think this has been done in the past and this will be done in the future. Other governments will do it. We have said in the past, when companies wanted to establish in Ontario, "Fine. If you come to Ontario and provide jobs, we are going to give you free municipal services. We're going to give you 10 years of free hydro service or free development charges."

I think this is part of negotiation and consultation. It's part of government doing its job and saying that, for the time, this is the best thing that we should be doing. When the government does it, Speaker, it doesn't do it for the government, it does it for the people of Ontario.

I think that here today we should realize that, yes, the minister has proposed Bill 75, which calls for the amalgamation of two or three agencies. The only hope now is that this will be travelling and we'll be hearing from those individuals who have an interest and will make some comments, and, together with the independent review which is under way, we can come back to the House and offer something to the people of Ontario—those who, on a daily basis, open up the door. They want to make sure that the hydro is there; they want to make sure that the machinery will be working for them today and tomorrow.

I remember, Speaker, when we were buying power from Manitoba or Quebec or from the States, paying high dollars—not when our dollar was at par but when our dollar was at a much lower rate. Is it fair to say, "Now we're creating more energy than we need"? Maybe. Let's find the balance.

As I said before, every government tries to do the best for the time, and I think this is a time when we have to look at Bill 75, really have a good look at it, and say, "This part, I am not happy with." We heard the opposition saying, "There are areas that we don't like." Granted; let's delve into it. Let's take a look at it. Let's hear from the people outside and let's come back with a better bill.

I thank you for the time, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to comment on the speech of the member for York West on Bill 75.

I had a chance to speak a little earlier. You can't cover everything. Bill 75: Let's talk about what the government claims it will do and then ask ourselves whether this is the priority issue here for the province of Ontario.

The minister claims that this is going to save \$25 million a year—not a paltry sum, but not very significant

when you put it into perspective and compare it against what this government has cost with some energy decisions.

We know that they decided to build a power plant in Oakville and then cancelled it a couple of years later. They decided to build one in Mississauga and actually started building it. In fact, it's there. You've got all kinds of infrastructure there that cost hundreds of millions of dollars. They cancelled it. For those two power plants—for the one alone in Mississauga, they made an offer of \$82 million to get out of it. That's the minimum that it's going to cost. But experts out there are saying that it's going to cost maybe \$1 billion for either one of them.

Here we have a government that claims that this bill—they say, "Oh, we've got to get this bill passed"—might save \$25 million through amalgamation of two agencies, the IESO and the OPA, against possibly \$2 billion that those same people who are paying the hydro bills—meaning your mother, your father, your grandmother, your grandparents, your aunts, your uncles, your daughters—will be paying for those costs. Those are the numbers we should be talking about. Plus, that's what the minister claims this will save. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, any time Liberals tell you they're about to save money, watch your wallet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: You know what? I listened to the words that the member from York West utilized in his speech. It's one of the reasons why I chose to come here, where a like-minded individual could actually sit down and bring change, have a discussion, listen to the points coming from everybody around the table. If you and I could sit down at a table, heck, we could do more for Ontario than a lot of the people could do in this House, I'm sure, but it takes a lot more than just me and you. It takes everybody else to participate at those discussions at the table.

1720

I look forward to those discussions when they go out to the general public, having chats and meeting up with individuals, but the day that you are going out, when you do go out and you have those discussions with individuals—because there are some concerns in here. There are changes, the elimination of the integrated power system plan. That opportunity is for the public and stakeholders to give their suggestions, and the planning suggestions that they might have will be greatly reduced.

I don't have to look too far. I look at a community like Wawa, and I know that the mayor up in Wawa, Mrs. Linda Nowicki, will have a lot of comments to say in regard to some of the deregulation and the privatization that has happened in the past in regard to Hydro One. Wawa is surrounded by a wealth of dams, but unfortunately, a few years ago that wealth was taken away from them. It was due to the deregulation that was done by the Harris government regime that was here then.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Whoa, whoa.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Oh, yes, it was. I was living there. I was working in those sawmills when electricity

rates went up—one of the other reasons I'm sitting here—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I hope the residents of Peterborough riding had tuned in this afternoon because they got to witness two dynamic speeches delivered by the members from York West and Scarborough Southwest. They certainly, in very clear terms, articulated the benefits and issues that are associated with Bill 75.

We all know that a good electricity policy has great impact on the economy. I just happened to pick up this morning the report from Robert Hogue, who is the senior economist with RBC research. Here's what he had to say: He talked about real GDP in Ontario accelerating to 2.5% in 2012, just shy of 2.6% projected for all of Canada. That's up from an estimate of 1.9% in 2011.

He said with the rebound of the auto sector—less drag. We know that the auto sector, the major operators in Canada are certainly very dependent on a very safe, secure, reliable and consistent electricity supply. That's what is incorporated in Bill 75: to bring two organizations together, the IESO and the OPA, in order to provide solid direction for the future of the electricity system of the province of Ontario.

As I said, it was clearly articulated by two outstanding speeches this afternoon. The members from York West and Scarborough Southwest, I think, clearly laid out the parameters that we're talking here. We're looking at the new agency. It would provide responsibility for procurement and market operation, providing opportunities to align contracts and market rules to benefit all consumers of the province of Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I salute these members this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's been a long afternoon so far, Speaker. I apologize.

This bill is just another bill to deflect attention off this government's failed energy policies. It's a bill to deflect from their failed Green Energy Act.

I'm sure the people of New York and Quebec are happy as anything about the Green Energy Act and this failed policy that this government has. In fact, I'm sure there's an energy producer of the year award in New York state, and we should maybe put the minister's name on it. I'm sure he'd win the contest. He's giving away electricity to other places at very heavily subsidized prices, and the people of Ontario get to pay the difference. Aren't we lucky? I'm sure that the people over there in the States and Quebec are just saying, "Go, Ontario, go. Send it over here. We appreciate your efforts."

We had introduced legislation to put a slowdown to the Green Energy Act provisions, especially when it came to wind turbines. It was interesting to hear from the NDP that maybe we should have looked at that a little more. It would have been nice if they had supported us

there, and maybe we wouldn't be in the position we are today.

The government says that we're going to save money by this bill. I haven't seen the government save money yet in eight years. Look at the deficit we have. Look at the debt we have. I'm certain this program is going to fall short of saving anybody any money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough Southwest has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I just wanted to respond briefly to the members from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Algoma-Manitoulin, Peterborough and Perth-Wellington.

I just want to say one thing that I think will resonate more clearly with any opposition to this bill. We've established a panel of experts who are going to work with the Electricity Distributors Association and identify potential efficiencies and ratepayer savings. The people involved are panel chair Murray Elston and panel members Floyd Laughren and David McFadden. The panel will consult broadly and look at a lot of issues, including long- and short-term financial savings associated with consolidation, benefits for ratepayers, long- and short-term operational efficiencies, and potential risks. This Ontario distribution panel will report back to the Minister of Energy within a year. So we're looking at the whole system. We're not just looking at one part of the system; we're looking at very different parts. They're going to report back to the Minister of Energy. They are a very well experienced panel, and they are going to be able to point out where the efficiencies are, where the savings will be found, and where we can deliver better energy.

Don't forget, Mr. Speaker, that we as a government have tried and are continuing to try to rebuild an old system: new wires, new transmission locations and other things that were constructed almost 100 years ago. We're doing that. They're aging; either we leave them alone and let the whole system fall apart or we fix them. It's like owning a house: Either you take care of it, or you let it fall apart.

So we're doing that, and we've created a panel to deal with the most important issues. I think it's important that we listen to this panel and move forward to make sure our system works properly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act. As we all know, it amends the Electricity Act to allow for a merger of the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, and the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority.

From the outset, I feel this Bill 75 should probably meet the same fate we continue to pursue for the Ontario Power Authority: Both should be scrapped, both the bill and the OPA itself. I won't be voting for this one.

We hear comment of a \$25-million savings. That's fine, but it doesn't go nearly far enough. We really have to get on with the business of fixing that which has

driven unaffordable electricity rates. It has driven unsustainable green pricing and a constant and ever-increasing onslaught of wind towers across rural Ontario, across my riding.

Speaker, we have seen the unprecedented growth of the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority, under Dalton McGuinty. I consider this a bureaucratic success story, and I say that facetiously. It was formed 17 years ago; 15 people were meant to be a transitional body created by the government to manage supply. It quickly empired.

Mr. John Yakabuski: "Empired." That's a good word.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'm not sure if that's a word. I have made it a verb. It has empired to a 235-person permanent entity at this point—things are obviously going to change—where something like 87 people are on the sunshine list and make over \$100,000 a year. The CEO—now there's an example of an empire or a pyramid—makes \$570,000 a year.

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Over those seven years, the OPA has taken over \$370 million of taxpayers' money, expenses have risen from \$14 million a year in 2005 to well over \$76 million a year today. It's all part of the McGuinty dream, if you will, to lay the foundation of an unelected, bureaucratic, decision-making pyramid. Sit back and watch the empire grow, as it provides, in this case, more public sector jobs, while siphoning ever more from the indebted government coffers and from electricity ratepayers.

When the Ontario Power Authority, the OPA, was hatched, if you will, in 2004, the energy minister at the time told us that it would not become a "massive bureaucracy" that increases families' electricity bills. In fact, he told us it would depoliticize Ontario's energy sector. Despite Minister Duncan's promises, the "transitional," the "virtual" OPA has indeed bloated to the massive bureaucracy we have today. Despite the promises that Ontario's electricity bills would not be impacted, we all know the fact that Ontario families' bills are skyrocketing. It's clear they cannot afford Dalton McGuinty's bloated energy empire and bureaucracy, as we see in the OPA, let alone the IESO.

They certainly can't afford the FIT program. That's been mentioned in debate this afternoon. That program will continue to play a key role in driving up rates. I certainly hear that at the door. Quite honestly, people cannot afford to pay the bills.

The Feed-in Tariff program, again, brought to you by your friendly neighbourhood OPA, is rolling out the green carpet for unwanted and unsustainable wind towers that take up residence in our fields, our shorelines and our neighbourhoods, not only in my riding across Haldimand county and Norfolk county, but across much of rural Ontario. The OPA's FIT program—Mr. McGuinty's FIT program—has set up a system: We see the green energy developers are being paid unsustainable subsidies, 20-year contracts, and we all pay the bill under what I consider an ideologically driven program.

The problem we have in Ontario is too much wind and too much solar available, mostly when we don't need it

and at unrealistically high prices. There are rules that say wind and solar must get preference on the grid, which means we either have to waste cheaper green hydro-electric—the water electric power—or nuclear power, or sell it at a steep loss, and we've heard about that this afternoon.

To prevent the oversupply problem from getting worse, we have some ideas. We propose cancelling the FIT program for both large and small power generators. We would immediately halt all the new projects still in the approval queue. We would also end special deals with Samsung and ensure that any future power deals are the result of competitive contracts, not secretive, one-off, knock-off arrangements. All the existing projects that are presently connected to the grid remain in place, but we can't keep contracting for power when we don't need it and when people can't afford it and our economy cannot afford it.

While the government has recently lowered the rates for future wind and solar contracts a little bit, they're going more slowly down a path they shouldn't be going down in the first place. It's a path that does not lead to a solution to our energy woes.

Any future industrial wind or solar projects must meet a number of criteria—three tests, if you will. First of all, do we need the power? Secondly, is the price competitive? Thirdly, is the host community willing to accept the project?

As the cost of electricity climbs because of these green schemes, people continue to fight what I consider to be a conga line of industrial wind turbines that the OPA, the FIT, and Mr. McGuinty have unleashed on rural Ontario.

In my riding, so many companies have arrived. There seems to be no planning or oversight other than through their corporate boards. We have Samsung, Capital and NextEra.

Very recently, the opponents to NextEra's Summerhaven wind project in Haldimand county have been pursuing a legal challenge. Haldimand Wind Concerns and a fellow named Bill Montour, of Six Nations—this is the other Bill Montour, not the elected chief—have appealed the MOE approval for this wind project. That's one route. We also see the protests, the petitions that are endlessly read in this House, the pleas for change that are echoed from all corners of this province as the OPA's plans, Mr. McGuinty's plans, drive costs higher and impose mammoth industrial structures in farm country, cottage country.

In two years, Ontario will have the highest household power rates in North America after Prince Edward Island, a province that has a population of a little more than most of our ridings, actually. According to the reports, an average household will see the electricity cost on their hydro bill jump by something like \$72.

We hear from the Ontario Energy Board, the OEB, that prices are changing due to the replacement of coal-fired generation. How's that working out? We've had smog for the last several days in this part of North America.

Replacement of coal; natural gas, nuclear and renewable energy: all key to the OPA's energy plans. This is kind of understandable, considering the unaffordable green energy rates that McGuinty and the OPA first committed to under the Feed-in Tariff program—in some cases, 20 times the going rate. You don't have to be a mathematician to figure out that paying 80.2 cents per kilowatt hour in a five-cent-per-kilowatt hour market will continue to drive, and has already driven, sky-high electricity rates. That's when a green energy scheme comes up against economic realities.

The truth is, the OPA has helped Mr. McGuinty turn what was once the strongest manufacturing sector in the country, built on economically attractive energy rates—something we've had at least for the last 100 years—into one of the weakest sectors in the Dominion of Canada. As green-powered energy rates rise, manufacturers are looking for the exit doors, resulting, as we know, in the loss of something like 300,000 manufacturing jobs. The Auditor General commented and stated that for every one green job, we lose between two and four jobs in other sectors. Even those green jobs that the McGuinty team have crowed about—and many are here this afternoon—are also beginning to wither on the vine.

It comes as no surprise. We all understand that power is a major input cost for business. Steadily increasing that cost, therefore, leaves less money to reinvest in business, in research, in innovation to foster business. There's less money to allocate to plant and equipment, and less money for job creation.

I think most people in Ontario recognize the sucker's bet, if you will, on the subsidization of electricity producers. The writing has been on the wall for a number of years. Certainly in Europe and the United States, they've tried and they've failed with respect to some of these very uncannily similar green energy gambits.

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Again, the result: job loss and piling up of debt. We see it in Germany; we see it in Spain, in Texas. California was mentioned earlier this afternoon. These jurisdictions all have well-documented war wounds resulting from their failed green energy schemes. And yet we see the continuation, under OPA planning and programming, that will further our descent down that same road.

Even the esteemed C.D. Howe Institute has endorsed what we have been saying, something we've been saying all along, actually: Expensive energy experiments are the wrong way to go. None other than the former CEO of OPA, Jan Carr, who is now with C.D. Howe, noted that government green energy subsidies amount to \$179,000 per job per year, and that's locked in for 20 years. Carr went on to state that the McGuinty job estimates fail to take into account the many employed in construction that would have had construction jobs anyway, and again she made reference to increasing green electricity rates, the negative impact on the cost of doing business, and the impact on unemployment. That's the former CEO of OPA, Jan Carr, who very clearly recognizes the road we're down.

Even the government itself has indicated that power prices will increase by 46% by the year 2015. Again, if you look at the overall picture, it's a very, very pessimistic picture, both short term and long term.

Roger Martin, who in 2010 chaired a task force titled Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress, estimated the Green Energy Act and its FIT program would cost ratepayers \$32 billion over the next 15 years.

This government's own economic consultant, now a household name, Don Drummond, said in his report that "the inextricable link between electricity prices and economic performance requires us to review possible avenues to reduce long-term costs to electricity consumers." Again, the bottom line is, our power bill shouldn't be funding failed job creation and green energy subsidization programs.

This government—a bit of advice—should take steps to make sure that our power system is more efficient, is sustainable and delivers power at the lowest possible price. Consumers need more choice, and they need a system that's more competitive. That's so important, whether we're using electricity to charge a battery or to charge an electric drill or to run a welder or a grinder or to make steel or to refine metal or to heat one's home. I heat with electricity. Maybe I have a vested interest in where things have been going recently in Ontario.

So we do need a fresh approach, one that recognizes that affordable energy is fundamental. It's fundamental for our economic success. We need policies that will keep prices under control for industry, for entrepreneurs, for households, and obviously a system that's not only reliable but also sustainable.

Affordable energy has always been the cornerstone of this province's economic success over the years. Other provinces have taken the right steps to ensure a steady supply of power at fair rates, and those provinces are now well positioned to capitalize on that. Then there are provinces like Ontario where power rates are being driven by, again, expensive energy subsidies.

A fresh approach is required. We need an infusion of new ideas, of access to new markets, both to buy electricity and to sell electricity, new ways of doing things—new blood, if you will, and new money. We need new ideas and new money, new markets that any asset needs to go on to the next level. We need that kind of change. Government must get back to its proper limited role: provide strong and independent regulation, obviously; provide that oversight, the oversight I do not see with these private wind corporations; conduct long-term planning, obviously; and establish a system where the power that is provided by companies is offered on a competitive basis where the best prices and the most efficient technologies win out. Government does not need to micromanage this file. I'm concerned: Even with this legislation, I see an opportunity for just a continuation of micromanagement.

So we've heard that Bill 75 will remove the OPA's power, their duty to develop an integrated power system, and be replaced by ministerial energy plans. We've seen

this trend: more government control in the sector, more government control over the activities of the existing OPA and the OEB by a combination of directives and policy imperatives. Again, the door was open and is open for undue political influence, influence that often outweighs any factual evidence.

We've got a local situation I want to touch on with respect to Samsung and yet another deal that nobody seems to be aware of between Samsung, Six Nations and the Ontario government. The elected chief of Six Nations—this is the other Bill Montour—talks about this letter, although the government indicates they had nothing to do with this. In fact, the energy minister was quoted as saying this agreement, the Samsung-Six Nations agreement, had nothing to do with the government. Elected Chief Montour in the media said, "He indicated a letter from the Minister of Infrastructure states that the lease from the land surface will be turned over to Six Nations." This is for the electricity contract. He goes on to characterize the letter as unprecedented and indicated, "They have always maintained we have no right to that land." So now electricity policy that has intruded so much on our area has been mixed in with the land issue, the land rights crisis that is bubbling—continues to bubble—in my area. Just to wrap up, I ask this government for a copy of this letter. People in my riding have had it with being in the dark about some of these machinations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's my pleasure to comment on the remarks made by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk and to talk a little bit about Bill 75. He spoke about some issues in his own riding, and I'm going to digress a little bit.

In my riding—I brought this to the minister's attention, and I trust that he's working on this—I have a mine opening up, and they can't get power. They've been dealing so long with Hydro One that they had to bring it to my attention. I brought it to the minister's attention, and I'm sure he's working on it. They want to start production in September, and they're still putting in the posts to see where the line is going to go.

So it's an incredibly complex situation. You have on one hand—and my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk spent a lot of time talking about it—we pay so much for power in this province, and a lot of people can't pay for the power, which is true. On the other hand, this province was built on economical power sources, and that's how the industrial engine of this province was built. What he didn't mention was that they were public power sources. That was how this province was built: on affordable public power.

What we are seeing now is that—and we don't want to get into the argument about whose government actually started it. But the Green Energy Act is the ultimate of—a decision was made at some point to switch from making the province run on industrial to making the province try to run on selling power as what made this province go;

the selling of turbines. They tried to kick-start that, and we are paying a massive price for that.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I wish to compliment the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for his contribution on the debate on Bill 75, as he has touched on a number of issues around hydro, not only the bill which is in front of us but on the hydro issue itself.

A couple of things that I paid particular attention to was that we have to find a new approach, a new way. I think this is exactly the intent of the bill. It is out there and we are debating it today and we already hear some debates, some pros and cons. I have to say, with respect to the member, he has already announced his intention on how he's going to vote on this bill. I would hope that, as the bill moves along to public hearings and comes back, he may see it in a different way. I hope that indeed he and his colleagues will be able to support the bill.

He also mentioned the cost of hydro we have to buy and we have to sell. Again, this is the reality of the times. Some of those issues are not within our powers. The good Lord has not given us yet the knowledge how to store this extra power.

I have to say that the intent of the government was good, very noble. We are looking to increase jobs. When you increase jobs, you need new structure, new factories and new equipment, and they need extra power. So the intent is good. The reasons behind it are good.

I hope we can continue to build on that and provide Ontario with clean, good electricity for future generations and for our economy as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: Always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk, the Duke, because he shoots from the hip and tells it like it is and he shares facts. The Duke shared a number of thoughts: how inefficient and poorly managed the energy sector is under this Liberal government. He shared how costly the system is and that energy costs are driving hundreds of thousands of jobs out of Ontario. He shared that the Green Energy Act and the energy experiment of the Liberals have been a complete and abject failure.

One item that particularly caught my attention was the duplication. We have an IESO, the OPA, the OEB—all bureaucracies that, in essence, do the exact same thing, which is different words around them, and they've built—I think the word he used—empires out of each of these. This is on top of the Ministry of Energy and all those qualified, capable staff there.

He shared with us that there were 15 transitional jobs in the OPA when it started. This has ballooned to 235, with 87 of those earning an unbelievable one hundred—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's up to 92.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is it even higher?—\$100,000. Unbelievable that we have to have that much bureaucracy and administration. It starts to make me think that maybe

it was a precursor to the Ornge scandal that we're actually speaking about in this House every day—the layers and the layers of empires and schemes and scam that goes around and around.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not as bad as the LPO, the Liberal Party of Ontario.

Mr. Bill Walker: Exactly, Mr. Yakabuski.

The energy minister purports that this bill will cut spending by \$25 million. However, in the estimates tabled by the Minister of Finance, it suggests that there will actually be a \$5-million increase. Speaker, which one of these ministers do we trust or can we believe? I'll leave that—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Neither one of them.

Mr. Bill Walker: Correct.

This bill is tinkering, playing on the margins. It's a missed opportunity, and I will not support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before the next speaker, I'll remind the member from Renfrew that he seems to be out of his seat. If you want to make loud comments, I suggest you go back to your seat. Thank you.

The reply from the NDP, please.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just wanted to comment on a few of the words that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk brought up. Yes, it is an expensive experiment that has come forward, in particular the Green Energy Act. Not all of the act is bad. There is room for it here in Ontario. There is room for solar. There is room for wind. The problem that we're having in a lot of our communities is that the consultation process is the difficult part. It infringes on the properties of individuals. It infringes on a community. It causes a community to divide. That's one of the biggest problems.

My friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane actually brought up another point: He doesn't have enough energy in his area. And you know what? Having 125 jobs in northern Ontario is like having maybe about 10,000 of them in southern Ontario. That's the importance of getting that project going forward. I hope that the minister was listening to my friend and the point that he brought up.

The other point that my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk brought forward is that we need to have new ideas. He's absolutely right: We do need to bring new ideas in regard to what we are going to do, how we are going to strike the right balance for the province going forward. Unfortunately, in the white paper plan that the Conservatives have brought forward are old ideas—old, failed ideas that are looking again at more privatization in the province where it's proven that it has caused more expensive things going forward. It has contributed to higher bills for all Ontarians.

On behalf of the NDP, where First Nations make the decisions as far as where they're going with the economy—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Haldimand-Norfolk has a two-minute reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Maybe just to follow up, the member from Davenport made reference to the white paper, but he also made reference to a region of Ontario that can't get electricity and has a lack of electricity in a province that has a surplus of electricity. You would think if there was any role for government, it would lie there.

The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane talked about mining. Mining requires a lot of electricity. The smelting of the product of mining requires a tremendous amount of electricity. I think of Xstrata in the Timmins area, one of the largest users of electricity probably in North America. Where did Xstrata go? They left Ontario; they could not afford the electricity in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Bill Walker: That sounds like GM.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I just heard the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound speak up again, and I thank the member for his summary of what I presented. I agree with everything that you said. This guy needs a nickname as well. But he points out in estimates that the \$25-

million savings that we hear about is reversed; it's going to be a cost of \$5 million.

The member for York West talks about a need for a new way. We heard the call for new ideas and mention of the white paper. For a start, we wish to open up both Hydro One and OPG to investment, as many in this House will know. The first step is to negotiate a partial sale to the major pension plans in the province of Ontario. These funds are the largest in Canada. They need a secure, long-term investment. Then we can follow that with a public offering, institutional and retail investors, and invest some capital in both these organizations—well-respected organizations.

Thank you, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being two minutes to 6, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
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Thursday 14 June 2012

Jeudi 14 juin 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 14 June 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 14 juin 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO UNDERGROUND INFRASTRUCTURE NOTIFICATION SYSTEM ACT, 2012 LOI DE 2012 SUR UN SYSTÈME D'INFORMATION SUR LES INFRASTRUCTURES SOUTERRAINES EN ONTARIO

Mr. Bailey moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act respecting an underground infrastructure notification system for Ontario / Projet de loi 8, Loi sur un système d'information sur les infrastructures souterraines en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today with my colleagues and with all members of the House to debate this important issue.

I'd like to draw attention, before we start, to the west visitors' gallery. Seated there, you will find many proud supporters of Bill 8, the Ontario underground infrastructure notification system. I'd like to pay special recognition to Jim Douglas, president of the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance, and Sue McGovern from the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association. Many other representatives of industry are here with us today, and there are more who are coming later this morning. There are people here representing Hydro One; Toronto Hydro; Enbridge; Union Gas; Landscape Ontario; Ontario One Call; PVS Contractors; the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association; the Toronto sewer and watermain contractors' association; Con-Drain, an infrastructure health and safety association; and many others, Mr. Speaker. This isn't actually introductions. I know that sounds like introductions, but we're past that, I know. This group and many others have shown tremendous leadership by championing the issue of safety for Ontario residents, and I'd like to thank all of them at this time, and everyone else in this House, for their support.

I'd also like to pay tribute to my colleague Paul Miller, from the NDP, who co-sponsored this bill with me. This is my second go-round at this. Paul was kind enough to agree to co-sponsor this with me, and I'd like to thank him and his party for their co-operation.

Of course, my members across—

Mr. Paul Miller: And Jim.

Mr. Robert Bailey:—and Jim, the Minister of the Environment, of course, and the House leader and the many others who put this deal together, and of course, our House leader, and the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Mr. Yakabuski, the whip, the miracle whip, who also was able to help put this together with our House leader—it took many people to put this deal together—and my party, too, who gave me a lot of support, all my colleagues, obviously, as well.

I was thinking last night. This isn't in my prepared notes, but I'm going to waver a little bit, like others do here from time to time. I was thinking—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Never me.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Not the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, at all, ever.

I was thinking last night about my earlier career—and I don't like to think how many years ago—I know no one will believe this out there, but it was going on 50 years ago. When I was a young fella, working with my father, he had a small contracting business, so I actually ran heavy equipment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: So you were child labour, then.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It was child labour, yes. It would be illegal today. I know that Ms. DiNovo would be after my dad today. This would have been child labour today, we would say, but I didn't feel exploited.

It was a great opportunity for me at that time to learn about industry and learn about hard work. We worked with many municipal leaders, and people in the sewer and water main business, and so it was kind of a natural fit. I got to thinking about this last night, and I should have had it in my remarks but I didn't. That opportunity there gave me an exposure to industry and to the hazards on the job site. Safety is a lot more prevalent today in industry and in the municipal field than it ever was back in my day, back in those days when I was just a young fella, and a good thing that it is. But that gave me some understanding.

Later on in life, I went into Nova Chemicals. I worked at a number of places. Nova Chemicals: I spent over 30 years there. Near the end of my career, I was responsible for health and safety issues, and contractors. The culmination, the start of this bill, started one night at a sewer and water main reception, actually. Sue McGovern and

others—some of them are here today—we got talking about the vagaries of industry and all the rules and regulations. We got talking about it, and I said I understood something about that because I actually did excavation permits and was responsible for them to my boss at Nova Chemicals. Lots of times, when he said, “Is everything ready to go?”, I said, “Yes.” I thought so, you know. I never really felt confident that we had everything located. We in Sarnia–Lambton have been the leaders in One Call and “Call before you dig,” long before the rest of Ontario. So I understood what they were talking about. I think that was one of the first times they had anybody that they felt kind of had their back, understood the issues, understood the vagaries of industry and the cautions and the hazards that people could go through.

Anyway, it was kind of a natural partnership, I say, with my earlier career, then with Nova and then, obviously, coming here. Maybe that’s why I was supposed to come here, I think: for this bill and for the health and safety of others.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Among other reasons, Bob, among other reasons.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Among many. I see my colleague from Peterborough there. I’m sure he’d say, “Many reasons.”

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The member from Renfrew said he needed a singing partner.

But anyway, to get back to the serious part here, development across this province and in our communities has made the business of excavating in Ontario very risky. Sitting idly by and doing nothing to increase safety is no longer an acceptable option for this government. The well-being and livelihood of the residents of Ontario cannot be taken for granted. It’s time for us and this government to act.

I, along with MPP Miller, from Hamilton–Stoney Creek, and many stakeholders here today, believe it is long overdue for our province to have a mandatory One Call system. That is why the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and I have introduced Bill 8, the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012, otherwise known as One Call.

Bill 8 will create a single-call system for all underground locates in Ontario used by homeowners and excavators alike. So instead of having to call more than a dozen numbers to receive all of your locates, homeowners and excavators would make one free call.

Mr. John Yakabuski: One call.

Mr. Robert Bailey: One free call. Our presence here today marks a very important milestone for our province. Up until this point in time, Ontario homeowners and excavators alike have been reliant on a patchwork system to locate underground infrastructure, much of which is outdated. To be frank, Mr. Speaker, Ontarians are left with a system which is compromising the safety and well-being of homeowners and excavators alike.

0910

But today, members of this Legislature will have the opportunity to fix that, once and for all. Today, each and

every member has the opportunity to vote in favour of Bill 8: in favour of increasing safety in Ontario; in favour of modernizing the locate industry; in favour of an industry-led initiative—industry-led, as I say; in favour of cutting through unnecessary and restrictive red tape; and in favour of a simple, free, single point of contact for utility locate information in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, a single-call system is something that could have, and should have, been legislated here many years ago.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Long ago.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Long ago. And that probably precedes this government. Instead, for decades, Ontario has put up with an outdated, complicated and cumbersome locate system.

Before you landscape or fence your lot, excavate for a patio area or pool area, add a porch, or many other excavations, you as a homeowner or an excavator are expected to call for the locates of underground infrastructure on your property before you dig. In other words, you’re expected to call for the locations of those pipes, water mains, wires etc. that could be under your property. Then those utilities, if everything goes right, are supposed to arrive at your property and mark this infrastructure. The problem is, in many communities across Ontario, you may have to call more than a dozen phone numbers to ensure that you have covered everything that might be underground at that particular location. Before you start your project, you need to account for the electrical power line, cables, gas and oil lines, sewers, telecommunications etc. So I don’t think it will be much of a surprise, Mr. Speaker, or to anyone else in this House who is watching this morning, who is up and around this early, when I tell you that some homeowners and excavators simply aren’t bothering to call for locates before they dig, thus causing a great hazard.

During the review of Bill 8, the Standing Committee on General Government had the opportunity to hear from dozens of presenters over a number of days. There were representatives from municipalities, utilities and industry, as well as private citizens. Many testified about the growing complexity of Ontario’s infrastructure network. One expert noted that on a residential street that has over 50 homes, his workers would likely have to cross a minimum of over 250 utilities to complete any underground work on that stretch of road. And it is likely that these sorts of numbers will only increase. Our communities are destined to become denser. That is the intention of this government and its greenbelt policy. As more and more people require utilities and services in our communities, utilities will be layered in. The complexity of that underground network of utilities will only increase. Industry experts in Ontario estimate that there is over \$100 billion worth of buried infrastructure in our province at this time, and that number is probably low. Yet there is no one source of complete or detailed information about the location of all of those critical assets. The ownership and responsibility of that vast network of underground infrastructure is spread among hundreds and hundreds of owners in Ontario.

Just for a moment, consider the real-life case of a group called North Rock Group, a GTA sewer, water main and road contractor. Steeles Avenue is a boundary between York and Toronto, and also between York and Durham, so there are four municipalities that intersect there. Within these municipalities, you have many cities, such as North York, Markham, Toronto, Richmond Hill and Vaughan. These municipalities at one time may have had their own independent utility and hydro companies. When the North Rock Group, as they told us in committee, gets called to do a water main repair on Steeles, before it even begins to remove the asphalt for the repair, they need to notify Bell, Enbridge, Power Stream, Toronto Hydro, Hydro One, then the Toronto traffic, because they control the lights and traffic signals on Steeles. Then North Rock would have to call the Vaughan roads department, because they also control lights, and the traffic signal on Steeles. Then North Rock Group would have to call Rogers, to locate their cables. Then they would probably call Atria communications, to see if they have anything in the area. Of course, York region would need to be called to determine whether it's their water mains or Toronto's, and then North Rock maybe would have to call Toronto to make sure that it's not theirs. And there's still more—but I might not go on too long at that.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, that's why we need a One Call system.

Depending on where the break is, North Rock would also have to call the city of Toronto to locate the sanitary sewers and the storm sewers. Then they would need to call the city of Vaughan to finally locate the sanitary sewers.

North Rock reports that these calls—I'm tired already, just reading them out. North Rock reports that these calls would usually take eight hours to complete, and that's on a good day, if they're lucky, if all the utilities were able to show up and perform their locates in a timely manner—which they are not mandated to do at this time. If they don't show up right away, it's not surprising that this project and repair could take days or weeks, severely affecting traffic and the ability of people and businesses in this area to function. This current system of patchwork information and independent locating responsibility does not reflect the increased complexity of this modern province of Ontario and its infrastructure or the need to kick-start development in this sluggish economy.

Mr. Speaker, at committee, the members repeatedly heard testimony that contractors are often forced to wait weeks for locates. Logistically, the current system is held together by sort of a thick red tape that does nothing but slow down projects in Ontario, cause cost overruns and delays. This unnecessary red tape causes confusion and frustration. It leads homeowners and contractors alike—I don't like to say this, but sometimes they take risks. They take shortcuts without getting all the required locates, thus jeopardizing everyone in and around the vicinity of the dig. This is what I mean when I say that Ontario has

an outdated, complicated and cumbersome system in place, and we need to resolve that today by voting for One Call.

The members of the government often like to defend their decisions to the people of Ontario by saying that they're modernizing things in Ontario. I ask today that those members who want to modernize things in Ontario and bring Ontario up to that standard vote in favour of Bill 8 and modernize the Ontario locate system. By voting to modernize Ontario's infrastructure and locate system, they will also be voting to increase safety for Ontario's workers, residents and municipalities.

Accidental damage to underground infrastructure is not only expensive, but it can be deadly. We all know there was a tragedy in Etobicoke back in 2003. I won't go into all the details, but we, as legislators, have a chance today. Sometimes we debate a lot of different issues in this Legislature, some of paramount importance, others some people would rate as maybe not as important. I think that this bill here today is very important for health and safety, for the environment, for business, for homeowners, for everyone alike. It's an opportunity—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The government should be doing it itself.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, governments should be taking the lead, but sometimes we have to coax and lead along.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank God for Bob Bailey.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, digger Bailey.

Anyway, we, as legislators, have a chance to take action to help prevent the sort of events that have happened in the past.

Mr. Speaker, the passage of Bill 8 ensures that families can sleep more comfortably knowing that their loved ones are now much safer going to work and that an excavation in their neighbourhood is less likely to put their personal safety or property at risk.

For those members wondering and saying to themselves, "Can this actually work in Ontario?" the answer is yes, and we have a great model south of the border. Currently, each and every United States state has in place a mandatory One Call system. The federal United States government thought it was such a good idea that they mandated one number for the whole United States, all 50 states: 811. When you dial 811 anywhere in the United States, you are automatically connected to a call centre in your area that has access to the underground information.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: In Alaska. They have them there, eh? The member from Peterborough talks about Alaska.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of the 811 system, the incidents of damage to infrastructure and utilities have decreased—and this is very important—by over 70% between 2004 and 2008.

Interjection: Even in Alaska.

Mr. Robert Bailey: And that's even in Alaska. So we need this bill in Ontario to do the same thing.

The organization and capacity to implement this system is currently available in this province. One Call is

already operating as an industry initiative out of a central call centre in the city of Guelph, with more than 130 members, representing over 700 infrastructure agencies and utilities, and over 45 municipalities at last count, and those municipalities represent upwards of 70% of the population of Ontario. So the largest part of Ontario is already covered, whether it's municipalities or population.

Unfortunately, industry analysts estimate there's still a good 400 organizations in Ontario with assets in the ground that haven't been logged and located. We want to do that and this bill would do that. Not until every organization with underground infrastructure is participating will this province-wide One Call system really work and be able to reduce risk to our workers, our communities and infrastructure. That's the result the good people in this province want when they pass this legislation.

I want to take a moment to discuss the good work that was done by the members of this House in committee. Bill 8 was studied by the Standing Committee on General Government by members of all three parties. They heard testimony from over 36 different presenters and received many more submissions from hundreds more.

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I believe that the members approached their work on Bill 8 in a fair and reasoned manner. I want to take this opportunity to thank the members from Sault Ste. Marie, Willowdale, Kenora-Rainy River, Don Valley East, Ajax-Pickering, Trinity-Spadina, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Prince Edward-Hastings, Elgin-Middlesex-London, Mississauga-Brampton South and Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. Their input and deliberations over Bill 8 helped to amend and produce what I believe is a very strong bill and one that is ready to be voted into law in Ontario.

Before I conclude—I think I rambled too long at the start—I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the extraordinary efforts of my staff in getting Bill 8 to this point. My constituency staff back in my Sarnia office—Michelle Roe, June Alexander and Dela Horley—have done an outstanding job of working with my local stakeholders, planning events and garnering support for Bill 8 in and around Sarnia-Lambton.

The member from St. Catharines said the other day in his remarks, and I think everyone in this House would agree, that the people who work in our constituency offices and our offices here in Queen's Park are what make us better members every day and enable us to do our job.

I also want to thank my Queen's Park staff that's represented here today: Anthony Rizzetto; David Donovan, who's away on vacation and couldn't be here; and also Margo Miller—or Margo Duncan; sorry. I'll let the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek explain that.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I wanted to see if he was listening.

Together, this group has done much of the heavy lifting to get Bill 8 ready for where it is today, from con-

sulting with industry to working with legislative counsel to meeting with and organizing stakeholders and setting up media events to drafting speeches, media releases and committee materials to letting everyone who will listen know that this Bill 8 is a great idea and one that is ready to be passed into law today.

In conclusion, I want to thank my co-sponsor, the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, whom we'll hear from later. Our joint proposal takes aim at the current complicated and cumbersome system where homeowners and excavators are expected to make these dozens of phone calls. A vote in favour of Bill 8 is a vote to increase safety in Ontario, modernize Ontario's locate system, support an industry-led initiative, cut through unnecessary red tape, and mandate a simple, free, single point of contact for utility locate information in Ontario.

I hope that all members of this House will recognize the merits of this simple yet effective One Call solution. I ask that all members of this House vote in favour of Bill 8.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 8 streamlines the voluntary system currently in place for excavators who want to know what utilities are buried in their dig site. Even though these excavators may be professionals who do this sort of thing every day, they cannot rely on information that may not be current or accurate. If these professionals could have difficulty navigating the system, individuals who are embarking on their first project would be overwhelmed by it. To address this problem, the industry created a voluntary One Call system endeavouring to get all utility and other companies with buried cables, pipes, utility boxes and such to provide the exact location of all their infrastructure to the One Call project. Many jumped at the opportunity to ensure that their infrastructure would not be unnecessarily damaged during a dig. They were also pleased that anyone preparing the dig, whether it be for a new structure or a new garden, could make one call to find out if they were at risk of breaking an electricity, gas or propane line or even an old septic line. The current Ontario One Call system has about 153 members, including the founding members: Union Gas, Bell Canada and Enbridge Gas.

The Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance, a not-for-profit, 400-member-driven organization dedicated to ensuring public safety, environmental protection and the integrity of underground infrastructure by promoting damage prevention practices, stated in its press release supporting Bill 8, "Public and worker safety are at serious risk when utility lines such as buried pipelines or hydro lines are struck or damaged because homeowners, building contractors and other excavators do not obtain the precise location of lines before they dig."

I agree wholeheartedly with the alliance's statement that, "Safety cannot be a voluntary exercise."

Earlier this year, nearly 40 municipalities had already joined the existing Ontario One Call Ltd., most notably

my hometown, Hamilton; London; Kingston; Oshawa; and Kitchener.

From the outset, the Ontario Sewer and Water Main Construction Association has supported this endeavour. Their president said, "There is an urgent need for a mandatory One Call system that extends across the province to ensure the safety of our workers and the safety of the general public."

Canada's largest natural gas utility and a long-time advocate of this kind of mandatory legislation, Union Gas, stated in a press release, "Ontario should move to pass the Ontario One Call Act—a bill that would improve safety, save money and increase productivity." Union Gas also stated that, "In addition to the risk of public emergency and the inconvenience of utility outages, economic analysts conservatively estimate that damages caused by excavators who don't call before they dig, cost utility customers, municipalities and taxpayers about \$39 million a year. There are significant additional costs related to dispatching emergency services to incidents, liability related to injury and/or fatalities, and interruptions to businesses."

At present, there are approximately 700 stakeholders operating underground infrastructure across this province.

As this system evolved, the industry began to push for it to become mandatory. A mandatory system would require all those operating underground infrastructure to participate in a province-wide, single, 24-7, not-for-profit call centre to provide the locates for all underground infrastructure in Ontario. Without this system, property damage has totalled nearly \$39 million every year. This isn't just a cost for the utility companies; it has costs for governments and individuals as well—a significant loss of revenue, productivity and business efficiency. When one adds the cost to businesses, it's easy to see why the costs of construction are so high, and often why projects run over the estimated completion time.

In 2010 alone, there were over 3,200 natural gas line breaks in Ontario, Speaker. In 2008-09, two accidental breaks resulted in fatalities, deaths that could have easily been prevented with accurate, up-to-date information on the infrastructure that exists underground. With statistics like these, we have to wonder why there has been any resistance to the immediate implementation of a mandatory One Call system, and with urban and rural development in Ontario creating an extensive web of oil and gas pipelines, telephone cables, fibre optic networks, sewer and water pipelines and electrical and transit signal wires that provide essential goods and services to our communities, we have an increasing need to get this system in place very quickly.

The implementation of Bill 8 will also capture federally governed systems such as the TransCanada pipeline, which must participate if the Ontario system is mandatory.

Additionally, across the province, we have a variety of timelines and methods to prepare for an excavation which an individual or company must know before even

thinking of making the changes or improvements they envision.

As energy costs go higher and more municipalities are included in the natural gas system, we need to ensure that greater protection is afforded to all Ontarians. Not only do we have increasing natural gas lines, but we have increasingly complex underground infrastructure for many utilities. How many of us really thought about a landscaper potentially causing a break in some underground infrastructure? We forgot how deeply they must sometimes dig to make the changes a homeowner wants or needs. As I've said in the House before, sadly, there are too many examples of accidentally severed propane and natural gas lines. The delayed effect of a severed gas line leaves one with a mistaken assurance that everything is fine when nothing happens at the time it is severed.

I also fully support mandatory carbon monoxide detectors in every dwelling and workplace, but these detectors should not replace the requirement that all underground infrastructure must be easily identified before any work is done. Carbon monoxide detectors can help us escape poisoning, but they can stop an explosion from a severed line also.

One of the advantages of this 24-7 system is that it allows homeowners to deal with these issues when they get home from work, and not have to take their lunch hours for days on end just to get through to the complex numbers of organizations currently required.

As I've said before, Speaker, one of the concerns that I do have about the system is that we bring all insurance companies on board also. We want to know that they fully support the system and will consider one call to Ontario's One Call system as complete due diligence in the case of a claim.

One of the concerns that a businessman from the north raised is the establishment of a call centre in the north, as well as one in southern Ontario. As we can only assume, there will be quite different types of underground infrastructure, likely many more propane lines and the TransCanada pipeline in the north, and we'll want to ensure that this new organization is staffed with people who know the north and will have a better understanding that all information as provided is accurate.

While going through the process leading to this morning's debate, I have been saddened by the political game-playing that has occurred sometimes. Bill 8 should never have had to wait until this negotiated day of debate to be passed into law. When the safety of Ontarians is clearly going to be enhanced by a bill, whether a private member's bill or a government bill, it really should be a no-brainer that it's passed into law.

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Don't get me wrong. I'm overjoyed that Bill 8 will become law today and receive royal assent forthwith. But without the circumstances of a minority government, we may very well have been in a completely different situation. During the last session, actually just a year ago, my Bill 92, which would have brought automatic sprinklers, another safety feature, to every retirement home in

Ontario, was blocked, unfortunately, by the government. The government House leader of the day ensured that no government member would attend the subcommittee to move the bill forward to the public agenda. Because of that government's determination to stifle that progress of a necessary piece of legislation, automatic sprinklers are still not mandatory in every retirement home in Ontario.

During the last Parliament, when I was trying to have my bill moved forward, we had the deaths of seniors at Muskoka Heights retirement home in Orillia, a facility without automatic sprinklers. And just a month ago, we had a tragic loss of two more seniors' lives at the Hawkesbury retirement home. I can only imagine that these deaths may not have occurred if we had had the mandatory automatic sprinklers legislated when I first brought the bill to this chamber, but it fell victim to political game-playing and we are here a year behind the desired full five-year implementation timeline.

It's an extremely sad commentary on how the last Parliament worked, but the forward steps that we have taken with Bill 8 leave me hopeful that my current Bill 54, my latest attempt to bring automatic sprinkler systems to every retirement home in Ontario, will be fully embraced by all sides of this chamber and become law before the end of this year.

I want to express my deep appreciation to the many people who have put endless hours of time, energy and commitment to bringing Bill 8 to this point of third reading and royal assent. The Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance, representatives of Union Gas, Bell Canada and Enbridge, who were leading the initiative from the very beginning and who have sent their staff to Queen's Park on many occasions to further this bill, have done yeoman service to this province. Not only have they done research, lobbied through their industry and here at Queen's Park, but they have worked with the current One Call organization to bring it on board with a move from a for-profit to a non-profit situation, never wavering even one iota in their commitment to this necessary legislation. We all should take our hats off to these organizations and their staff for their tireless, might I say relentless, dedication to getting this bill in place this morning.

I want to thank the members of my caucus for their support: first, of my co-sponsoring of this bill, then in ensuring that it would be here for debate today. Thank you to my caucus. It is the first bill with my name on it that will have passed third reading and royal assent. It is a privilege and an honour.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Could be. I've been very, very frustrated over the last five years, but there is light at the end of the tunnel, Speaker, I hope.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: And I might have two wives, according to Mr. Bailey. That's another story.

Mr. Robert Bailey: We'll have to work that out.

Mr. Paul Miller: Work that out, Bob, please.

To be fair, I also want to thank the government members across the floor. Their support of Bill 8 is much

appreciated, not only by me but certainly by every person who has their project made easier and safer because of the passage of Bill 8.

Finally, I want to thank MPP Bob Bailey, the member for Sarnia-Lambton. Bill 8 was Bob's legislative initiative, and he invited me to co-sponsor it with him. I appreciate Bob's confidence in me and that he invited me to be part of something that brings greater safety to the workers and people of Ontario.

I also would like to thank my staff, especially Margo Duncan, not Margo Miller, for doing all the hard work she did working with Bob's office and his staff and, of course, with the alliance.

This is a very exciting day here at Queen's Park. It also shows, Speaker, that with push and shove and some manoeuvring, things can get done in a minority government. The government saw the light on this, and I'm certainly much appreciative that they put party partisan politics aside and did what's right for the people of Ontario. We need more of that around here, Speaker. When I first came to Parliament, I was gung-ho and I thought we could do a lot. Of course, I never realized that partisan politics went on so heavily, and it certainly frustrated me. But thanks to Bob and a lot of other people working together and putting these walls aside, we can do things that are good. It certainly gives me hope that we will do more of this in the coming months and years that will be good for people.

I think people out there in the public certainly want to see this Parliament work. They want to see members do the right thing. Certainly, there's nothing wrong with robust debate and exchanges of different ideas. That certainly is healthy. It's a democratic process. But in the end, I think common sense should prevail—that's not a Mike Harris thing by the way. Common sense should prevail, and I also believe that it will. I think today is a starting point. Thank you to you all, thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the alliance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate? The member for Mississauga-Brampton South.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would like to thank all the stakeholders who are present today at Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

It's a pleasure to speak on Bill 8, brought forward by the members for Sarnia-Lambton and Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. I applaud the members for their dedication in bringing this legislation forward. It's very clear that this is an issue they deeply care about. This bill would, if passed, establish a single point of contact for all underground utility location services in Ontario.

An existing corporation, Ontario One Call, which currently operates in Ontario, would be established under this bill. If passed, it would be the only non-profit call centre to handle all underground locates in Ontario. This new non-profit corporation would be mandated to operate a call system to receive excavator requests for the location of underground infrastructure across the province. It

would identify for excavators where the underground infrastructure is located in the vicinity of a dig site. It would be mandatory for all owners of underground infrastructure to join the Ontario One Call corporation, including entities such as Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation and every municipality across the province. Even small municipalities with minimal underground infrastructure would be forced to become members.

I was a member of the committee that studied Bill 8, and we heard many views and strong concerns. Mandating Ontario One Call as the single one-call service provider creates a monopoly that underground infrastructure owners would have no choice in joining. Unfortunately, it would have significant negative impacts on other one-call service providers that already exist in the province of Ontario. It would effectively put organizations like DigLine and DigNORTH out of business.

Every year, people in Ontario are injured, vital services are disrupted and important public infrastructure is damaged when buried utilities are hit while digging. The expense of a utility hit is borne by the contractor, locating company, utility provider, insurance companies and affected public and business owners.

Our number one priority at the Ministry of Consumer Services is public and consumer safety. Risks to public safety are unacceptable. For this reason, the ministry is absolutely supportive of reducing hits to vital underground infrastructure and increasing worker and public safety, while reducing service disruptions and damage to vital infrastructure.

That is why, in 2009, the Ministry of Consumer Services pursued a voluntary approach to drive a substantial increase in participation in a one-call-to-dig system across all utilities. We believe that a voluntary approach is more efficient and effective than a bureaucratic red tape monopoly approach mandated by government.

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Regulations already exist which require excavators to obtain locates prior to digging. Let me repeat: It is already the law to call before you dig. The existing locate regulations are enforced by the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, the Electrical Safety Authority and the Ministry of Labour, respectively.

We continue to encourage all utility owners, including municipalities, to join this voluntary program—and it is working. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we understand that about 80% of Ontario's population is covered today by a one-call-to-dig system for gas utilities, the single most dangerous underground utility. About 70% of Ontario's population is covered by electrical distribution companies who are members. About 50% of municipalities are already members, and it is our understanding that there has been recent momentum for a number of other municipalities to join a one-call system of their own choosing.

We believe that the voluntary system is the way to go because the users and beneficiaries of a one-call-to-dig system are the best qualified to establish the operating criteria.

The three existing organizations in Ontario that respond to excavators' locate requests, namely Ontario One Call, DigNORTH and Digline, have made strides to ensure worker and public safety through their effective routing systems. And because the cost of the One Call utility locating and marking service is paid for by utility members. Our current voluntary one-call-to-dig system protects the value of taxpayer investments in underground infrastructure.

Together, we have a common goal in maximizing the reliability of our underground infrastructure and protecting the safety of workers who service that infrastructure as well as the public who depend on it.

We also want to accomplish this as efficiently and inexpensively as possible, saving time and tax dollars. Voluntary participation ensures that the One Call system delivers services at rates that members feel are appropriate. A mandatory system could cost hard-pressed taxpayers their hard-earned dollars and hurt Ontario families in their wallets and purses at a time when our government is trying to help Ontario families cope with rising costs. But that is only one reason that we cannot support Bill 8 in its current form.

We can only endorse an approach that has the support of all impacted stakeholders. Currently this mandatory approach, as in Bill 8, doesn't have the support of all stakeholders. Municipalities, through the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, have told us that they cannot and will not support mandatory participation in this one-call-to-dig system. NOMA, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, also opposes Bill 8. We all have an obligation to listen closely to these representatives of our municipalities across the entire province. AMO and NOMA have determined their position because many small municipalities with minimal underground infrastructure would be forced to be members in a program they don't need.

They are not alone. Other stakeholders do not support Bill 8, including, for example, the Electricity Distributors Association, Shaw Communications and DigNORTH.

A new regime of regulatory obligations would be forced on organizations and municipalities. This could result in impacts on costs and staffing, and higher costs could be passed on to consumers. I have said "could" because there is no way of knowing the impact at this time. But I believe that any resulting service problems and conflicts would affect Ontario families and the public.

We also know that the bill doesn't require accurate locates, and it defines "excavator" quite broadly. What point is there in providing locates that are not accurate? We know that inaccurate locates are a contributing factor of strikes to infrastructure.

And if Bill 8 includes a homeowner digging with a shovel, is this a burden we want to place on Ontario homeowners and consumers every time they wish to dig in their flower beds or backyards? Bill 8 would make it an offence for homeowners to do so, and they would be subject to offence provisions if they failed to call Ontario One Call for merely having a green thumb.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 8 has many flaws that cannot be fixed through amendments. During the public hearings and submissions, we heard some stakeholders raise concerns about Bill 8, and those are worth examining and addressing. We heard that the bill proposes a one-size-fits-all approach that may have unintended consequences. Additionally, the proposed bill doesn't include provisions for appointing enforcement personnel to conduct inspections or investigations. We cannot support the unintended consequences that we can see.

We want an approach that has the support of all impacted stakeholders; we want an approach that sets standards and makes improvements to the current status quo; and we want an approach that ensures that data and measurement outcomes are available, so that we know that we are making improvements that help protect the people of Ontario.

Improving safety for the well-being of Ontarians is paramount and will remain this government's number one priority. We continue to support a one-call-to-dig system in the province of Ontario, and I commend the work of industry, especially the Ontario regional ground alliance, in strengthening Ontario's One Call system to eliminate the underground hits to infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate that I applaud the members opposite for bringing this legislation forward. Their intentions were good and their concern was to ensure greater safety. But as I have said earlier, I was also a member of the committee, and there were stakeholders who opposed Bill 8, and their concerns need careful scrutiny.

I think that we want an approach that works for all—the current voluntary approach.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am—well, I normally say I'm pleased, but that's an understatement, to be able to speak to a bill like this, Bob Bailey's. This is a practice that I believe is in place in virtually all, if not all, of the American states. They're way ahead of us on this.

As Mr. Bailey said, this is a fundamental issue of safety and common sense. If we have the opportunity to make one call as opposed to, as he was talking about earlier, maybe a dozen or more, why would we not exercise that opportunity?

This is a great moment as far as I'm concerned in the Legislature here, where we're going to pass a bill that will make it more efficient, more effective and safer for all the people of Ontario in all our communities.

I'm out of time. Congratulations, Bob Bailey.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bailey has moved third reading of Bill 8, An Act respecting an underground infrastructure notification system for Ontario. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day.

Hon. James J. Bradley: We have no further business, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That being the case, this House stands adjourned until 10:30 later on this morning.

The House recessed from 0951 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'd like to welcome Dr. Michael Barbour to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, a professor from Wayne State University, and one of my good friends from Carleton University, who actually got me involved in Liberal politics. Welcome.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: In the members' gallery today we have page Kyra Colbert's grandmother Laure Brezel and sister Anita Colbert, and also the Rev. Jodi Hoar. So welcome.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, this is a tiny bit out of the ordinary. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank Paul Tye, my staff member who, after having served two and a half years in the government House leader's office and who often is sitting over there, has decided to leave us and move out to Calgary. He's in the members' gallery today.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: I think Paul's personable nature, his hard work ethic and his colourful bow ties will be missed by everyone. I know all members will want to wish him well as he leaves the Legislature after two and a half years of service.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know we're in for an absolutely great day when we start to heckle introduction of guests.

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad that most people smiled and giggled when I said that, so we're off to a good start.

Let me please introduce in the public gallery, from the riding of Scarborough—Rouge River, Hadid Hyder, here to see his cousin page Tameem in action. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Again, in the members' gallery, we have from the riding of Don Valley West, to see page Stavroula in action, mother Maria Kanellopoulos, father George Georgiadis, and brother Panayioti Georgiadis. We welcome them to Queen's Park. Thank you for joining us today.

It is now time for—

Mr. John Yakabuski: What about the pages?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We've got to come back for another day.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They don't come back? My thanks to the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for the heckle.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To my colleagues in the House, I think we should be bidding a very fond adieu to our wonderfully hard-working pages. This is their last day today.

I will share with you that they shared with me that they were grateful that the House leaders gave them an extra week. They were thanking you for that.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, eight months ago, during the election campaign and its aftermath, families and taxpayers sent us here a very clear message: one, to rein in spending, to pay down the deficit and balance the books; and secondly, to create private sector jobs in the province of Ontario.

Sadly, after eight months, both of these crises went unaddressed by the existing government. In fact, they became worse. Instead of creating more jobs, what did you do? You ignored our advice and you increased taxes on business, you increased personal income taxes, you doubled down on a failed energy subsidy policy for wind and solar that is driving up hydro rates, and you spent money and increased the deficit rather than decreasing it. What was it about the message you didn't get last time that said, "Our goal is to balance the books and create jobs"? Why did you go in the opposite direction?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I agree with the Leader of the Opposition: The voters sent a very clear message. They wanted a Dalton McGuinty-led Liberal government in this province, and they rejected returning to the old ways and the old days of the Conservatives.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have cut corporate taxes by almost a third. That leader and his party voted against that budget. We implemented the HST, Mr. Speaker, not an easy choice but the right choice, a choice that was supported by virtually every major business organization.

First they supported it, then they were opposed to it, then they supported it, then they were opposed to it, Mr. Speaker.

We cut the small business tax rate, and that leader and his party voted against it. We have taken the deficit from over \$19 billion to \$15 billion, bringing it down in an orderly fashion while protecting health and education.

The voters rejected him in October, elected this government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You took the budget from zero to a \$15-billion deficit. You ran up the debt. You're heading toward \$411 billion. You increased taxes, you increased hydro rates and you brought in new government programs that we simply can't afford. The result, Speaker:

Ontario continues to be a have-not province. We've lost jobs, not gained jobs. The deficit is heading forward. For five out of eight months since the election campaign, we've shed private sector jobs. It's the wrong course.

We have a better plan: lower taxes for businesses, lower taxes for individuals, energy rates that are affordable to families and businesses, to rein in spending, to turn our economy around. What didn't you get about the election eight months ago that said, "Our goal here: balance the books, create jobs"? That's where we stand. That's the way forward for the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It would be an interesting argument if it was factually accurate, Mr. Speaker, which it's not.

The Leader of the Opposition conveniently ignores the fact that the world economy is having a very difficult time, and in fact Ontario is outperforming comparable economies around the world. Mr. Speaker, our private sector is creating jobs. I will refer him to RBC, just yesterday. In fact, the private sector is stepping up to the plate. We're encouraging more of it through the tax cuts we've implemented. We now have a corporate tax system that's competitive. But most importantly, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who will close hospitals and close schools, in fact close down future growth, this government is committed to getting back to balance in a timely fashion in a way that protects those public services that will build a better future for Ontario, not take us back to the Mike—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary, the member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is also for the Deputy Premier.

Minister, you've spent the last eight months raising WSIB rates, raising taxes, driving up energy rates and failing to cut job-killing red tape. Ontario's economy is at risk with your policies. I have learned also that a major employer in my community, GM, has cut 2,000 jobs.

The Ontario PC caucus believes in a very different approach. We would cut taxes, treat energy policy as an economic policy and cut regulations in Ontario by one third. These are the steps required to restore Ontario to its rightful place as leader in Canada's economy.

How many more factories have to close, and how many more men and women and their families will lose their jobs before you finally seek our advice and do the right thing and cut taxes?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It appears as though the official opposition is a bit schizophrenic, Mr. Speaker. Just on June 2, let me read to you what Mr. Klees said about General Motors and Chrysler: "Ontario's auto bailout was a bad idea and the province should have stood aside and let Chrysler and General Motors go bankrupt." You ought to talk to your colleagues about that. Then he went on to say, "If you have to go bankrupt, go bankrupt."

1040

Mr. Speaker, we rejected that. We stood up to the plate—the only subnational jurisdiction in the world to do that. We worked with the Obama administration. We worked with the Harper government. GM is still in Oshawa, fulfilling its obligations. It's in St. Catharines. Chrysler is in Windsor and Brampton. RBC reported yesterday that manufacturing sales and employment are increasing.

Our plan is working. Their plan is to divide. They don't even get along among themselves. That's why you were rejected at the polls last fall, and you'll be rejected again because this party—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Deputy Premier: Here's the problem. We were given very clear orders from the public to reduce spending, to balance the books, to make sure we didn't fall into a debt crisis. What do we get at the end of the day, Speaker? We had a budget that was downgraded—the credit rating of the province of Ontario by Moody's—put on a negative credit watch by Standard and Poor's. This finance minister has had three downgrades under his watch.

I was proud to be part of a PC government that actually had upgrades in the province of Ontario, that had the finances under control and created jobs.

What should be up is down. What should be down has actually gone up. Spending should be down, but spending has gone up. The deficit should go down, but the deficit has in fact gone up. Taxes should go down, but they've gone up, and unemployment job losses in the province have gone up. It's time to reverse course and take on the PC plan to get a jobs pro-growth agenda in the province of Ontario. You wasted eight months. You kicked the can down the road. Time—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham will come to order.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let me correct the record. Unemployment, according to RBC, according to Stats Canada, is down, Mr. Speaker. According to RBC and according to Stats Canada, employment is up: 345,000 permanent new jobs since the downturn. Consumer prices are growing, but growing at a slower rate than other places.

In fact, Ontario is up, Mr. Speaker. The people of Ontario, the businesses of Ontario—the leadership of this province are up. This is a great province, a strong province. It is coming back. It will lead Canada, and it will lead Canada under the policies of this government. That member and his party were clearly rejected by the voters—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Supplementary.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Your member is trying to ask a question.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It is shocking, Speaker, how dramatically out of touch the Deputy Premier and his colleagues are if they think that people in Ontario are leaping with joy at their decisions—in fact quite the opposite.

They took a strong province, a province that was a leader in North America in job creation, that strode across Confederation with pride, that was the best place to find a job and start a business, and they cut it off at the knees.

You raised taxes. You put energy rates through the roof. You plunged us towards a \$411-billion debt. You got us downgraded. Their saviour was to be Don Drummond. We were waiting for Drummond for four months. He came in the door with his report and then you shuffled him out the back door before he got a chance to sit down. You rejected your own plan. You have no plan to balance the books. You're turning the mighty province of Ontario into the Greece of Canada.

We won't stand for it. We'll fight it every day. We want Ontario to lead again, and our plan will balance the books and make our province strong.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Their plan has more holes than Swiss cheese, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition will close hospitals. He will close schools.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's a lie.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: He is simply not—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're jumping the gun. How did you know I was going to ask that?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I just had a feeling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You just had a feeling. Thank you. So let's do that properly. The member will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member over here will not make comments while I'm trying to work. It is getting a little bit high. Let's bring it down.

Deputy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, we have cut taxes for individuals and for corporations. They voted against it.

Among themselves, they can't get along. That member says, "More for GM." That member says, "Close GM down." No plan, no leadership; not up to the job.

Dalton McGuinty's government is leading this province back—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: No doubt, Speaker: Dalton McGuinty's government has taken this province backwards. We're losing private sector jobs—a deeper hole that we're heading into. Three credit rating downgrades under this finance minister. He should be in the hall of fame for fiscal incompetence for the double-digit deficits that he has put on the backs of our kids and our grandkids.

I believe there is a better way, a better way that says that Ontario can lead again, to be number one in job creation, to attract investment, to balance the books in the province, and yes, to make the tough but necessary decisions to rein in spending, including an across-the-board public sector wage freeze; an end to corporate welfare in our province and a review, top to bottom, of every one of those 630 agencies, boards and commissions that says we'll free up the private sector to create jobs. I believe that better days are ahead, that Ontario will lead again, but we need change from this tired, out-of-date agenda that has taken our great province backwards.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Deputy Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government is fighting to create the future that this province wants. They rejected that leader and his party seven months ago. They will reject his proposals to close hospitals. They will reject his ideas to close schools and take teachers out of front-line teaching. They do not have a plan to get back to balance; we do.

One message I didn't hear in the last election was: Did the voters give us a mandate to ring bells? Let's talk about what they're doing. Just yesterday, they tabled an amendment to the budget which would cut off funding to Ornge. They want to cut off funding for air ambulance immediately. How do they propose we provide that?

They are irresponsible. They have no plan. There would be no future with them. That's why Ontarians rejected them seven months ago and accept the policies of this government, recognizing the difficult challenges in the global economy.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Deputy Premier. In the last election, the people of this province sent us here with some pretty specific marching orders. They were tired of an arrogant government that took them for granted. They told us to work together to tackle the challenges that we're facing.

New Democrats are very, very proud of the progress that we've been able to make, but it's clear that there's much, much more to do. Does the Deputy Premier accept that people are tired of the arrogant politics that they've seen from this government over and over again during their 10 years in office?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: All I can go by is the result of the election. They returned this party to power.

We have been responding to the very real needs of Ontarians. I am proud, for instance, that we have now passed Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act; Bill 19, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act; and Bill 46, the Supply Act.

I understand that the budget bill is before committee. We welcome the input of the third party, who, unlike the official opposition, actually wanted to make this Legislature work, and we've accepted a number of amendments. There are a number of other bills before the House that have been difficult to get through because the lack-of-leadership, absent-without-leadership Tories, have been ringing bells instead of doing the people's business.

We'll continue to work with the third party and any member of this House who wants to advance the interests of all Ontarians. We will disagree from time to time, but we look forward to that opportunity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people are hoping to see change that's actually going to make their lives better, but too often they see more of the same old politics from this government. Days after passing the budget motion, the Premier was bragging about schemes to force by-elections and restore them to majority rule. This week, we are seeing Liberal MPPs pull out all the stops to hide the cost of the cancelled power plants in Mississauga and Oakville at committee. Does the Deputy Premier even get it, that this is exactly the sort of thing that turns people off politics?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I think questions like that turn people off politics. I think members on both sides of this House—I again want to applaud the third party; we've worked together on a number of issues. We don't always agree, but I think they've done it in good faith. I think they've done it based on their interpretation of the needs of the people of Ontario, and I would not for one moment suggest anything akin to what she's suggesting about this side.

We look forward to that continuing work. The people of Ontario returned a minority Parliament. It's been a different experience for most of us. Other than perhaps the member for St. Catharines, most of us haven't served in minority Legislatures before. I think she's right: The people of Ontario want us to work together. I would try to resist the kind of rhetoric we just heard in the supplementary question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, whether the Deputy Premier wishes to admit it or not, I want to give him some idea of what I hear people say about politics and what makes them cynical.

They're worried about the growing cost of living, while the government hikes hydro bills and won't even tell them what the money is being spent on. They're frustrated by long waits in emergency rooms, and the government cuts front-line health care while spending millions and millions on lavish perks at Ornge. They're worried about jobs, while the government puts every

CEO—every bank CEO they know—on a jobs panel just to keep getting the same old advice.

Is the Deputy Premier ready to admit that the same old solutions simply are not working and that it's really a time for change?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm delighted to have the assistance of people like Floyd Laughren, David Cooke and Elmer Buchanan. We've involved a number of prominent New Democrats who continue to offer their great services to the people of Ontario. I believe there's a place for them, and I do believe that people like Gord Nixon have a lot to offer. I will not play that game of pitting one part of society guess another.

But let me tell you what some other voices say. In the Windsor Star lead editorial just today: "It's not often that a private member's bill gets the kind of public thrashing that greeted an NDP proposal to significantly lower car insurance rates for Toronto" and raise them in other parts of the province. It goes on. I'll share more quotes with her, Mr. Speaker.

We'd like to continue to work together. We will involve people like Floyd Laughren, David Cooke and others, we'll involve the Gord Nixons of the world, and we will try to build a better province for all Ontarians.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Deputy Premier—although I must say that New Democrats are pretty proud of trying to actually make our insurance system a little more fair.

I'm proud that throughout this session, in fact, New Democrats have been able to make the minority government work; I would agree with the Deputy Premier in that regard. We're actually trying to get some real results for everyday Ontarians: results like support for new child care spaces, support for local hospitals, support for the most vulnerable Ontarians and a much-needed dose of fairness for our income tax system.

But there's clearly a lot more that we have to accomplish. We've put forward some achievable proposals to create jobs, improve health care and make life more affordable. What I'd like to know is, will the Deputy Premier work with us to make these achievable solutions a reality?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we've been doing that. We're happy to do that. We will continue to do that. We will continue to work together to get important pieces of legislation through this House, to provide Ontarians with the framework we need for a better future for our children.

We have worked in good faith on a number of legislative initiatives, including the budget, which is before committee today. As I understand it, some 200 amendments from the opposition have come forward. We are dealing with those in committee.

We will work with all Ontarians. Yes, we will work with Gord Nixon, who is a member of the Order of Canada and one of our most respected business people.

We will work with Jim Stanford, a labour economist who has had great input. Frances Lankin is doing terrific work for us on welfare reforms.

Yes, we'll continue to work with all Ontarians to build the better future that I think all of us want for our children and grandchildren.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last month, Ontario lost 30,000 full-time jobs. The same day, 2,000 GM workers learned that they'd be losing their jobs. That's on top of over half a million people already looking for work here in Ontario.

Ontario, I believe, will not be back on its feet until families are back on their feet. Will the government commit to working with New Democrats to use the jobs and prosperity fund to get Ontarians working with a job creation tax credit?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have asked the task force on prosperity to look at that very issue. We do already have a number of tax credits available that are designed to assist employers to hire people. Those are important pieces of public policy. We do want to make sure that they work, that they in fact deliver on what they are supposed to, because they represent a large tax expenditure to the province of Ontario.

So yes. That's why we created this task force. We want to have a close look at all aspects of support to make sure that in fact it's promoting job creation here in Ontario, building a better climate for job creation in Ontario. That's why we have appointed a range of people from across the province, to work with us to give us that kind of advice to build that future that we all want for our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When I visit with folks across the province, one thing they tell me is that they want their health care system to be there for them when they need it. They want to know that they will have a family doctor when they need one, care for their aging parents when their parents need that care and access to an ER when a loved one is facing an emergency.

We simply cannot trust this government to tackle the challenges of health care tomorrow if you don't have the data about what we're doing today. The government promised to strike an all-party LHIN review. It hasn't happened yet. They keep promising it. We have a simple question, Speaker, which is: When are we going to see the striking of the panel to review LHINs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we're very much looking forward to a review of the LHSIA legislation, because it's very important that we continue to improve health care in this province.

I'm very excited about some of the initiatives. I'm particularly excited about our new seniors' care strategy that is being developed under the extraordinarily strong leadership of Dr. Samir Sinha, who is both at UHN and at Mount Sinai Hospital.

We know we can do better when it comes to caring for our elderly people and for our seniors. We know more house calls mean more people can stay at home longer. We know that more access to home care means more people can stay home longer. We're establishing care coordinators so that people who have multiple specialists in their lives have that care coordinated. We're also helping to support people in renovating their homes so they can stay home longer.

We're doing a lot. It's terrific work, and we're looking forward to the review of the LHSIA legislation.

TAXATION

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, a month ago you made headlines for bringing in the Liberal-NDP tax in an effort to push through your weak budget. We've told you that you have a spending problem, and therefore your new tax doesn't address the real issue underlying Ontario's fiscal situation.

Now, the respected economists at the C.D. Howe Institute have revealed your tax to be nothing more than a shell game. According to the report, "The new tax on high-income earners will likely create more economic costs than benefits." C.D. Howe estimates that this tax will not bring in additional money and instead will cost Ontario \$50 million by 2015.

Minister, when Ontario's on the hook for the \$15-billion that you created, why are you saddling the taxpayer with an additional \$50 million?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, it's interesting that the member opposite and the party are standing up for about 100 Ontarians who may be affected by this. What's even more interesting is that the bill is before committee, and there has been no amendment brought forward to take that out of the bill.

When we attempted to negotiate with the official opposition, instead of sitting down and working together, they chose to take their little ball and go home. They were absent without leadership.

I would invite the member opposite, if you feel that strongly, to bring forward an amendment in committee and then support the amended budget bill. You can do that. We have asked you to do that. You've refused to participate, and now—

Hon. James J. Bradley: You can count on the Tories to stand up for the rich—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They do want to defend the rich and famous as opposed to doing what's right for all Ontarians. I'll remind the member opposite that we also cut taxes on the lowest-income Ontarians.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: With this finance minister in charge, we get headlines like this. The finance minister has been reading for the last couple of days the RBC report. The headline in the RBC report says: "Ontario: In the Middle of the Provincial Pack." Is that good enough

for you, in this province that used to be the leader in Confederation? It's now a have-not province under your leadership.

The people of Ontario deserve a budget that addresses the real issues. What you've given them is a Liberal-NDP tax that actually creates a \$50-million hole. The economists at C.D. Howe last night said, "The new tax ... will be ineffective and risks creating more damage than benefit: Reduced economic activity will cost more to the provincial treasury than the province can expect to collect."

Minister, how many more shots are you going to take at Ontario's economy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Stop the clock.

I would like to make a comment that, basically, I wasn't prepared to stop the member—he had a few more seconds left—but I was going to stand to bring order because there were people heckling while you were asking your question from your own side and a conversation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And most of it was related to other conversations that were happening between people in the House.

Interjection: Throw Zimmer out.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think both of you are on my list.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am spending a moment just to try to bring it down and ask you to get this done right.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Today's *Sarnia Observer* spoke of the Tory energy plan and they conclude that it falls way short.

We are dealing with a difficult global economy. We worry about the future. We have put together a plan that has been endorsed by a range of Ontarians and others. We continue to move towards a better future. Instead of hooting and hollering and ringing bells and refusing to participate—that was the message the voters sent us. They said to come here and work together for a better future. The Tories took their ball and went home. We reject that, Mr. Speaker. They didn't bring forward amendments to the budget bill that they're talking about here in the House today. They have no plan—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm hearing heckling, and somebody might be on my list.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They're just simply not up to the job of leading this province. That's why the people of Ontario rejected them last October.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Minister of Education: As school is winding down, Minister, families out there are wondering why the government is not nego-

tiating seriously with Ontario's teachers and education workers, especially when those teachers and education workers are willing to sit down and negotiate in a respectful and productive way. What's holding things up, Minister?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I can tell you that our government is incredibly proud of eight years of stability and investment in education in Ontario, investment in education that has focused on students and put them first.

We have never lost perspective of the goals that we have: to raise student achievement, to close the gap, to ensure that Ontario continues to have a strong, publicly funded education system. We've had to make some choices, and in those choices, we have chosen on every single occasion to put students first, to put the classroom experience first, because at its heart, that's what education is about.

Our conversations with our partners in education are ongoing. I would encourage the members of the third party to encourage those who are not at the table to come back to the table so that we can have those important conversations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, if we're going to have schools that teach our children and look after them, you don't demoralize the teachers and education workers in them as your starting point. That's where you are. You go into those negotiations without respect for your negotiating partners. You know that destabilizes the system. You know that demoralizes those people who look after our children every day.

When are you going to get back to a serious approach and actually negotiating with the people who look after our children?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The member opposite does not know what he's talking about. We are at the table, we're having conversations with our partners, and for those who respect collective bargaining, that's the appropriate place to have those conversations. We have accomplished so much with our partners in education. We are doing the heavy lifting to make the right choices, choices that put our students first. Again, I would encourage the member opposite to respect the process. Respect the PDT process that has got us to this place where we are.

We've been recognized around the world as incredible in terms of the success that we are having for our students. I would encourage all the members opposite to respect that process that has had us recognized around the world for our student success. It's a process that has got us very far. We are continuing in that conversation, and it is one that each and every day we engage in, and we put Ontario students first.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is also for the Minister of Education. Minister, congratulations on passing Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act. A lot of people have been made very happy by the passage of this act.

As you know, I was fortunate to chair the safe schools action team, and this legislation was really part of the next steps in implementing the action team's recommendations. As a member of the action team, I was so privileged to be able to work with experts from CAMH's Centre for Prevention Science, from Sick Kids; with academics, our partners in education, the Canadian Safe School Network—such a host of experts who came to the table with us. What we learned helped us to inform the Accepting Schools Act. I'm very proud to have been part of the building blocks that led to this landmark legislation.

Minister, you often speak, when you speak about the Accepting Schools Act, about it being part of a whole-school approach. I wonder, Minister, could you please tell this House more about the details of the next steps in fighting bullying?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you very much to the member from Guelph for her question, but most importantly, thank you to her for her advocacy on behalf of children in this province.

Yesterday, the accepting schools expert panel met for the very first time. It is an amazing group of individuals, who have long lists of accomplishments, who are going to work with us to ensure that we use the resources we've put in place and that we find a pathway to ensure that every student, regardless of race, culture, creed, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, feels welcome and respected. It's a group that will help us not only ensure that we are able to respond well to incidents of bullying in our schools, but that we are able to prevent them.

I am so pleased that Mary Gordon has agreed to co-chair this committee. She's the founder and president of Roots of Empathy and she's recognized internationally as an award-winning individual who helps us teach our kids about empathy.

The other co-chair is Dr. Bruce Ferguson, and he's the director of the community health system resource group at the Hospital for Sick Children, well renowned in terms of the work that he's done. Those are just two examples of the amazing people who are working with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Minister, it's great to hear that the accepting schools panel has gotten to work so very quickly and that Mary Gordon is chairing it. I have tremendous respect for Mary.

When we traveled the province as a safe schools action team, we heard heartbreaking stories of bullying from all over the province. In the most extreme cases, the targets of the bullying committed suicide.

Bullying is something that has touched so many of us here in the Legislature. I know that all parties have had good ideas, and it was great to see Liz Witmer's legislation and so many of her good ideas being incorporated into Bill 13. I was pleased to be able to sit in on the committee at clause-by-clause and to be able to work with the members from Parkdale-High Park and Toronto-Danforth, and to be able to work so collaboratively with the NDP.

1110

Speaker, this type of collaboration is what we need to fight bullying, and that's why the whole-school approach is so important—the collaboration. Can you provide more detail on how that collaboration will work?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The member has it exactly right. We do need a collaborative, whole-school, whole-community approach to tackle this critical issue. That's why we will build on the investments we have made over the last number of years with respect to safe school initiatives. We've invested almost \$300 million since 2003 to make our schools the safest in the world, and we'll continue to build on that good work.

In addition, we'll be bringing mental health support workers into schools as part of Ontario's 10-year mental health and addictions strategy. We will be working with our curriculum council to report back on how we can integrate equity and inclusive education and bullying prevention across the curriculum. We'll be creating a public awareness campaign.

We have done that by working together, just as we worked together with the members of the third party, the members for Parkdale–High Park and Toronto–Danforth, to get this bill passed. We have an eclectic and wonderful group of experts who will be working with us, and we will do that in a whole school and whole community.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: Speaker, I want to commend Mr. Malcolm Bates, the director of the emergency health services branch, for his integrity, because yesterday Mr. Bates produced documents that Deputy Minister Saād Rafi refused to produce despite a formal request by the committee investigating the Ornge scandal.

Those documents confirmed that associate deputy minister Hugh MacLeod and Minister of Health George Smitherman told the director of the emergency health services branch that Dr. Chris Mazza would now be his boss. The very branch of the ministry that was to hold Ornge accountable was now directed by the assistant deputy minister to do whatever was necessary to support Dr. Mazza in implementing a scheme that would ultimately defraud taxpayers and put patients at risk.

Why would the deputy minister want to hide this information? What else is he hiding, and who is he trying to protect?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, once again, it's part of the story. I'm happy to read from yesterday's Hansard from committee. Mr. Bates—and I agree with you; he deserves to be commended for his integrity. He is a very, very fine public servant, and we are all grateful for his contribution.

Mr. Klees was asking Mr. Bates some questions, and he said, "Well, as I said, in 2003, it was relatively clear to me because I met with Mr. Michael Mjanes, who was the chief of staff to associate minister Dan Newman"—that of course is a Conservative—"and at that particular point

in time, Mr. Mjanes was very clear with us that the proponents of this particular service change wanted it done and wanted it done quickly, and the minister supported that."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, the minister forgets that there was an election, and—guess what?—it was a Liberal government, it was Minister George Smitherman, who implemented the program. Mr. Bates had the integrity to recognize that the motion we put forward was in fact the information that we were requesting. That's why he produced the documents that responded to the committee's request. That stands in direct contrast, Speaker, to the persistent, obstructive and defensive posturing of this minister's several deputies who have refused to provide information.

Here's what is encouraging, Speaker: We know that there are many, many more Malcolm Bates in our civil service who will help us get to the bottom, help us get to the truth about what happened, when it happened and who was responsible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If the member wants to talk about what's going on in committee, Speaker, I think we need to talk about the amendment, the motion that that party has tabled that will choke off funding to Ontario's air ambulance service. They are playing partisan games with people's lives. I think it is about as low as anyone could go.

I want to say to the member opposite and to the party opposite: Stop grandstanding. Stop playing political games with people's lives. Stop playing partisan politics. Withdraw your motion to choke off funding to Ontario's ambulance. Start being part of the solution: Pass Bill 50.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Acting Premier. This week, tragically, an Ontario Divisional Court upheld the view that women should earn less than men who are doing jobs of equal value. The reason? Ontario's Pay Equity Act allows it. What is the province going to do to make sure women and men are paid the same for jobs of equal value?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm happy to take the question. Certainly Ontario's Pay Equity Act continues to be recognized across Canada and internationally as one of the most progressive pay equity statutes in the world. Introduced in 1987, the Pay Equity Act addresses systemic discrimination in the compensation of work in traditionally female-dominated occupations. It applies to all public sector employers and all private sector employers with 10 or more employees across Ontario.

In January the Pay Equity Office, in fact, launched a pilot wage-gap program designed to measure the extent

of the gender wage gap in private sector Ontario workplaces. To date, the office has had an 80% response to the new program. That will help the office plan for future monitoring activities. For many years, the Pay Equity Office has actually been proactive, and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: —they have been providing increased monitoring as the year goes on.

I'd be happy to answer in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The simple reality is that women in Ontario make 71 cents for every dollar that men make. That's the reality.

Speaker, again to the Acting Premier: The court, in fact, said that Ontario's Pay Equity Act should be subject and could be subject to a charter challenge because of its under-inclusiveness. Instead of forcing more court battles, will this government do the right thing and close the loophole in its Pay Equity Act so that women in Ontario are finally given equal pay for equal work?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: As I said, Ontario's Pay Equity Act is recognized across Canada and internationally as one of the most progressive pay equity statutes across Canada. As I've said, the Pay Equity Office has conducted proactive monitoring focused on sectors with vulnerable workers, including retail, hotel and motel, and office workers. To date they have contacted 4,000 organizations, and they provide free training for employers, unions, employees and target groups about their rights and their obligations under the act.

Anyone who experiences or suspects an instance of a gender wage gap should contact the Pay Equity Office. This is about making sure that people are treated fairly and equitably across the province. Certainly, we are interested in working with the member, and any instances they bring forward, we'd be happy to work with them.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. David Zimmer: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour. Up in Willowdale, I've got a whole lot of restaurants, and in those restaurants, there are vast numbers of servers—some of the best servers in the province—and they're working very hard to earn their tips to pay for their school fees and to help their family incomes.

Most of these restaurants do have a fair and balanced relationship between the employer and the server. But there are some owners of these restaurants that are taking a percentage of tips from the employees.

I know that on Monday, the member from Beaches–East York introduced a bill that would seek to ban the collection of tips by employers in the restaurant industry. Minister, when the member from Beaches–East York asked you this question, you said you'd look into the problem and that you'd discuss the problem with him on what we should do as a Legislature on this issue. Minister, have you started those discussions with the member from Beaches–East York?

1120

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to take the question. As I have said previously, maintaining a fair and balanced relationship between employers and employees in all industries, including the hospitality sector, is very important to our government. I agree with the member: We do have some incredibly hard-working servers in this province, including in his riding, who use tips to pay for school or to make a living. In fact, in my own case I have two sons who worked in the hospitality sector.

Our government is always willing to listen to new ideas on how we can improve the lives of workers in our province. When I was first asked about this bill, I indicated my willingness to look at the bill, and I still feel that way. The member from Beaches–East York has worked very hard; he's been an advocate on this issue. I thanked him for bringing this issue to light, and in the spirit of co-operation, I have asked the member from Beaches–East York to meet with me. He has agreed. We're going to be talking later today about his bill and the issue of employers taking a percentage of server tips. I look forward to having that conversation, and I'm happy to respond.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you, Minister. Here's my follow-up question on this, because there's another sort of sub-issue here: In addition to having these great servers up in Willowdale and throughout the province, we also have some of the best dishwashers and line cooks and busers and hosts, and they're concerned about this, because the way the system works, those people share in the tips. I know that restaurant staff have told me that they're concerned that the bill, if it's passed, will inadvertently take away their share of the tips.

The idea here is that we want to prevent the restaurant owner from grabbing the tips, but make sure that the busers and the dishwashers and others share the tips. What are we going to do about that part of the issue?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member from Willowdale for the question. I've also heard, over the last couple of days, from a variety of support staff in the restaurant industry who also are worried that the bill may negatively affect them. The tip-outs are a contentious issue within the hospitality industry—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will come to order.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: —and what is considered a tip-out in one business is actually considered tip-sharing in another.

As the member from Willowdale has pointed out, there are establishments out there that collect from servers and share it with the dishwashers, the hosts, the hostesses and the busers, who help the restaurant function. The strategy is implemented by restaurants as a means to ensure that support staff actually take home more than the minimum wage. The current language contained in the bill suggests that owners may be forbidden from collecting tip-outs and distributing that to hard-working support staff.

It's tough to come up with one-size-fits-all in this issue. Clearly the member has good intentions, and I look forward to working with him further to make sure we restore fairness to the system.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the health minister. The Liberals can spin this all they want. The real issue, Mr. Speaker, is whether the Liberals actually want to get to the bottom of the mess they created at Ornge air ambulance.

The Liberals are out there spinning themselves dizzy on this amendment, but the truth is that the proposed budget amendment is merely a condition. It makes funding for Ornge conditional on the Liberals choosing to call a select committee into Ornge so that this House can investigate the true depths of this scandal that clearly involves Liberal insiders and is knock, knock, knocking on the Premier's door.

The real question is this: Since the Liberals threw their own health minister under the bus by making her word in this House worthless, will the McGuinty Liberals choose a proper parliamentary investigation into the Ornge scandal and allow the money to flow, or will they put Ontarians' lives at risk in order to hide the true depths of this ever-growing scandal at Ornge?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I don't care how loud they shout. I don't care about the tactics they are implementing. What I care about is that people in Ontario have access to the air ambulance services that they need.

I think it is absolutely despicable that they would play politics with the very people who need access to air ambulance. I am asking the member opposite: Stop playing politics with the lives of the people of Ontario. Withdraw your motion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: To the health minister again: The Liberals have used every delay tactic in the book in the public accounts committee to prevent us, the PCs, and the NDP from getting to the bottom of this scandal. So we have a PC motion in the budget that makes an Ornge select committee a condition of transferring funding to Ornge.

The Liberals have a choice. They can either call a select committee, as they promised to do when this House expressed its will, so as to allow Ontario's elected officials to get to the bottom of this—and the minister did say “if it's the will of the people”—or they can put Ontarians' lives at risk by not flowing money to Ontario's air ambulance system and not calling a full parliamentary committee into this.

Either way, this is a Liberal choice. They've made the mess. They need to respect the will of this House—or will they continue blocking us from getting to the truth about the Ornge air scandal? Which one is it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, for me, when I see an Ornge air ambulance in the air, I think about the patient getting care and getting to the care they need. I think about the pilot flying that aircraft. I think about the paramedics in that aircraft. I think about all the people on the ground who are making sure that that person gets to the care they need.

That's what this is all about. This is about the 51 people who yesterday were helped by Ornge. They want to cut off funding; we want to keep making improvements so that people in Ontario get the care they need.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Minister of the Environment.

The experimental lakes area located between Kenora and Vermilion Bay is a world-renowned fresh water research station that has been conducting scientific research on 58 pristine lakes since 1968. Among its credits are groundbreaking research on the impacts of phosphorus, helping reduce the environmental impact of hydroelectricity dams, invaluable research that helps us conserve and preserve aquatic life and fish stocks, in addition to very important discoveries on the impacts of acid rain.

There is no other facility like this in Canada or in the world. Despite this, the federal government has announced that it's shutting down the facility. Will the Minister of the Environment step up to fight this flawed decision made by the federal government?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I was hoping one of our members would ask me that, but you did, so that's very good.

Yes. In fact—you may not be aware of it—I'm already leading the charge. In combination with the minister from Manitoba, we had a rather lengthy discussion about this matter. You may be aware that we wrote a joint letter to the federal government asking them to maintain what you know and I know is an outstanding facility that is world renowned.

I've also been in conversation with the federal Minister of the Environment in this particular case to indicate our strong support for the federal government continuing to have this operation in effect, so that the experimental work done, which is outstanding and world renowned, will continue. I assure the member I'm on this and moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Minister, world-renowned scientists—including those from prestigious institutions such as Harvard—a Nobel Prize winner and even private enterprises have universally condemned this decision, citing that this research is too broad in scope to be taken over by a university. Despite this, the federal government claims that it will find a university or other private interest to take over the work at the research station.

A 1993 memorandum of understanding between the province of Ontario and the federal government states that the federal government has an obligation to return the lakes to the pristine state they were in before the scientific testing began more than 40 years ago.

Advocating for the federal government's continued investment in this world-class research centre will not cost this government a cent, and it will enable important scientific research to continue, protect the environment and natural resources in Ontario. Minister, what action will you take to force the federal government to honour the agreement and keep the centre open?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think the supplementary was written before I gave my initial answer, so I understand that to happen.

May I re-emphasize the fact that some time ago, the minister from Manitoba and I were on a telephone conversation. We then agreed to have a joint letter sent to the federal Minister of Fisheries and the federal Minister of the Environment. We have done that. I've been in conversation with the federal Minister of the Environment and have indicated clearly the importance of this particular facility.

I don't think there's any quarrel with anybody in any political party on how important this facility is. I want to advise the member that before she had asked the question, I had taken action on this. I will say to all and sundry that I have the support of the member from the area and, I think, of the New Democratic Party—I don't know about the Conservative Party—in this regard.

So we're moving forward, leading the charge—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

1130

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I have a very tough and very direct question this morning to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Minister, in discussion with the farmers of my riding just yesterday, they're very aware of the ongoing Growing Forward 2 negotiations that you and other provinces are conducting with the federal government to renew the suite of agricultural support programs to benefit farmers in the province of Ontario. Farmers have been using AgriStability, AgriInvest, AgriRecovery and AgriInsurance under the umbrella of the Going Forward suite for the last five years, and they're an important part of the process to make sure that the future set of programs is of value for Peterborough and Ontario farmers.

Minister, while negotiations with the federal government are ongoing, can you explain the part that farmers are playing in this important process?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Speaker, I appreciate the question. I'd be delighted to explain as best I can.

The member is quite right. We have had discussions with the federal government on a new suite of national

agricultural programs—not just AgriStability, but the full suite of programs. The member from Perth–Wellington seemed unaware of that yesterday.

Speaker, it's very important to ensure that the federal government maintain an efficient and effective suite of programs that work in the best interests of Ontario farmers. That's why, while continuing discussions with the federal government, we are also consulting our agricultural stakeholders on their priorities. Our stakeholders need to continue to talk with us, and they also need to talk to the federal government on how the federal government should be standing up for rural Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a supplementary to the minister. That's one of the most detailed answers in a long time.

The farmers of my riding will be glad to hear once again that you're working with the interests of Ontario farmers in these negotiations. But I know that it's not the only set of negotiations on agricultural programming that are currently under way. This spring, you began consultations with the non-supply managed sectors on transforming the risk management program that our government brought in. I know that many farmers in Peterborough riding are also very interested in this important process and are actively participating through their commodity groups.

Minister, can you please inform this House again of the reasons for transforming this excellent program?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Speaker, first off, let me state once again that the risk management program for 2012 continues to be the same program farmers signed up for. That said, we are currently discussing the program with our non-supply managed stakeholders, as the program must be bankable and predictable for both farmers and our government.

To quote the immortal words of the member from Oxford, "I don't think even the agriculture ministry should be exempt" from restraint.

Speaker, the program is in place, and we're working very hard together to make it even better.

GOVERNMENT REGULATION

Mr. Jim McDonell: To the Minister of Consumer Services: Under this minister's watch, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, one of the many unaccountable agencies under her control, continues to drive small business out of business with ridiculous inspection charges. For example, the money-grabbing TSSA charges a whopping \$150 per hour, plus HST, for junior inspectors who haven't even finished their training programs. They even have the gall to charge this obscene rate for their travelling time. These small businesses are clean energy propane retailers who are providing propane for the summer barbecue.

Mr. Speaker, doesn't this minister know that these exorbitant fees have simply forced most of our rural retailers out of business? Those who are left can only pass it on to consumers. As the summer is upon us, will the minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me assure all Ontarians that public safety is a priority for the government of the province of Ontario. The Technical Standards and Safety Authority is certainly a delegated administrative authority that has been a leader in the province with respect to the safety concerns in the province. Let me assure you that this is an administrative authority that we continue to work with in the province to ensure there is safety for the people in the province of Ontario.

We are a leader in propane safety and are the first jurisdiction—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Back to the Minister of Consumer Services: Starting in January 2013, grain farmers in my riding will face higher costs to certify gas burners and dryers with the TSSA rather than the CSA. Farmers in Perth—Wellington have told me that this will cause serious delays and result in higher costs.

When crops are ready to be harvested, farmers don't have time to wait for your TSSA inspectors to check their equipment. My question is this: When will the minister take action to free farmers from excessive TSSA red tape? Why does she insist on driving prices up and businesses out?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me assure the member opposite that the TSSA is an organization that is working to ensure public safety in the province of Ontario. That is the first priority of this organization.

We have continued successfully, in the Ministry of Consumer Services, to work with the TSSA to ensure that the public standards and safety are adhered to in various different sectors—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I am somewhat disturbed by some of the heckling that I'm hearing off the cuff. It's not appropriate, and the way in which it's being offered is not in good nature.

I will allow the minister to finish if she needs more time.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me just tell this House about some of the things the TSSA has done to enhance public safety in the province of Ontario. The Technical Standards and Safety Authority has conducted 29,000 inspections and prosecuted 34 of those businesses for violations of the Technical Standards and Safety Act.

The Ministry of Consumer Services wants to provide consumers with information to make smarter and safer choices through various consumer awareness activities.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin—Caledon on a point of order.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Earlier today in question period, in response to a question that my leader placed, the Deputy

Premier used—and I reference standing order 23(k), “uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.” The Deputy Premier used the word “schizophrenia.”

Interjection: “Schizophrenic.”

Interjections.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Unbelievable. I want to raise this as a point of order because I and a number of other members in this chamber spent 18 months dealing with stereotypes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

I appreciate the member's point of order, but I have to rule that it is not a point of order. However, every member has the right to change their record or correct their record, and I'm more than willing to hear that.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite is quite right. I inappropriately used that word. I withdraw it and apologize.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Hon. James J. Bradley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I think it would be appropriate to recognize that this is the birthday of one John Yakabuski, and we should wish him a happy birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While my spies did not tell me that, I too will wish the member a happy birthday.

VISITOR

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm very upset with the Minister of Environment for upstaging the seatmate of the birthday member.

I would like to introduce someone who wasn't here at the very beginning of question period. Ron Trbovich is joining us in the gallery today. I want to say thanks very much for coming here to spend the day with me.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now, I do suspect that everyone may not be able to see each other on the 20th, so I'm going to make a comment now. I would like to offer each of you a very safe and very happy summer break—

Interjection: We're back next Wednesday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've already explained that, without the heckle, if you'll give me a chance.

In the event that some of you are not here, and in the event that our pages are not here to hear this: Whether we talk about the thrust and parry of question period, I admire all of you. You are hard-working individuals. I know this is not a holiday break. I want to make it clear that I respect each of you for the amount of work that you do for our communities and our province. I thank you for it. Regardless of whatever happens inside of question period and whatever happens outside of question period, I want all of you to know that I'm here for you. For that purpose, I say thank you.

Now, as there are no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until Wednesday, June 30—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thirtieth? I'm adding another day. Until June 20 at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1142.

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Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
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Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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First Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 40^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 20 June 2012

Mercredi 20 juin 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 June 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 juin 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer. Good morning.

Prayers.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

An Act respecting an underground infrastructure notification system for Ontario / Loi sur un système d'information sur les infrastructures souterraines en Ontario.

An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait à l'intimidation et à d'autres questions.

An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne le taux légal d'augmentation des loyers.

An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to gender identity and gender expression / Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui concerne l'identité sexuelle ou l'expression de l'identité sexuelle.

An Act to revive Couto Gold Mines Limited.

An Act respecting Master's College and Seminary.

An Act to revive Hili Enterprises Ltd.

ANNUAL REPORT, OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that on June 19, the 2011-12 annual report of the Ombudsman of Ontario was tabled.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In accordance with the order of the House passed on May 31, 2012, the report of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs on Bill 55, An Act to implement

Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts, as amended, is deemed to have been made and is deemed to be received and adopted.

Report deemed adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONG ACTION FOR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR UNE ACTION ÉNERGIQUE POUR L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 55, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Debate?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure to just speak for a minute or two on Bill 55, which is before this Legislature today for third reading.

Mr. Speaker, all of us have been, of course, part of and following many of the machinations around the timing of this bill, around various amendments and things that have happened at committee, but I think that although that has made for perhaps some good media, none of us should lose sight of the purpose of this bill.

This bill supports a budget which was put forward—and I want to commend my colleague the Minister of Finance for the important work that he's done. He's found a balance. He's put forward a budget which suits the times, which addresses some of the fiscal and financial challenges being faced by this province, addressing a very serious deficit and putting us on a trajectory downwards to a balanced budget in terms of the deficits over the next couple of years. And it does so, Mr. Speaker, while at the same time being true to principles and values which are held on this side of the House, ones that see the importance of continuing to place an emphasis on education, health care and, speaking as Minister of Community and Social Services, the most vulnerable here in our society.

As I pointed out on numerous occasions in this Legislature, when you look at the years to come, the only sig-

nificant increases that we're seeing are in those key areas. I think it reflects our values that although we have to slay the deficit—and we're on a trajectory for that—at the same time we recognize the importance of keeping the services that we value so much strong and making sure we build on what we have achieved over the past number of years.

So I am proud that we are finally dealing with Bill 55 this morning. I look forward to the debate that's going to ensue and I urge all members to support what I feel is a very important piece of legislation for the future of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this budget bill, Bill 55. Before I get into the substance of the bill and speak a little bit about the budget, I want to take the opportunity to recognize the members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, who worked very, very hard on behalf of this Legislature and on behalf of the people of Ontario. I think I can say that we had ups and downs during the whole budget deliberation process at the committee, but at the end of the day, the fact that we are standing here today debating Bill 55 is because all the members from all three political parties worked well together. One of the secrets, the real good recipe for that was that we were able to converse, that we continued to speak with each other.

Speaker, I will first start with giving credit to our Chair, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, who did a remarkable job in keeping the tone, the decorum of the committee intact and making sure that he was a fair, neutral Chair. So a big thank you to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

I also want to thank the members from the government side, the members from Windsor West and Scarborough—Agincourt, for their hard work on this committee. There were a lot of fluid moments and they went along and gave very good advice to me as we were working through the committee. The member from Thornhill, whom I consider a friend, and I worked well together and spoke on a regular basis, so I want to thank him, along with the member from Nipissing and the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, who accompanied the member from Thornhill. And also the member from Beaches—East York, who was there throughout the whole committee deliberation, who is an experienced parliamentarian and of course brought his skill sets to the table as we went along, and along with him the member from Welland for her contribution to the work of the committee.

And I think I can say on behalf of all the members collectively that we want to thank the clerk and the committee staff for their diligence, for their hard work, for their professionalism in making sure that the work got done. So a big thank you to them.

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Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today in the House for the third reading of Bill 55, the Strong Action for Ontario

Act, 2012. From 2003 to 2008, Ontarians worked together to rebuild key public services such as education and health care and the province's infrastructure, which had been neglected by previous governments for over a decade. At the same time, the McGuinty government eliminated the hidden deficit left by the previous government and balanced three consecutive budgets between 2005 and 2007.

As we all know, in September 2008 the global economy plunged into a sharp, sudden recession that created new challenges for governments across the world, including here in Ontario. When this global recession hit, the McGuinty government chose to lessen the impact on Ontarians, like other governments in Canada and around the world, through stimulus investments in all our communities across the province. We boosted job training for laid-off workers and lowered income taxes for nine out of 10 Ontario taxpayers. During the global economic downturn, the government protected the gains made in education and health care.

I'm pleased to report that the global economy is recovering and Ontario's economy is growing stronger. Just as Ontario took action to help families through the recession, the province must now take strong action to grow the economy and continue to support needed job creation. The McGuinty government's deficit elimination plan will result in a surplus by 2017-18.

We must choose strong action today, Speaker, so that Ontario can avoid a future even larger deficit and painful choices imposed by forces outside of its control. The province spends more money on interest each year than on colleges and universities. As interest rates increase, so will those payments, taking precious resources away from education and health care.

I would like to point out that Ontario's per capita spending in 2011-12 is projected to be \$8,560, which is the lowest among the provinces and 11% below the average program spending across the other nine provincial governments. But despite this frugality, more must be done. If strong action is not taken, Ontario's ability to set and control its own priorities, choices and actions will be impaired. Eliminating the deficit is also essential for economic growth and job creation. That's why our government's March 27, 2012, budget took strong action to eliminate the deficit while protecting the health and education services families rely on most, and the initiatives we have proposed since then further strengthen these actions.

As we know, transforming Ontario's health care system is essential to managing the rate of health care spending growth to meet our commitment to eliminating the deficit. That is why the McGuinty government continues to transform and improve health care in Ontario. Between 2003-04 and 2011-12—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's a little hard to hear. We've got about five sidebars going on. It's really loud on this side. Your own speaker is up, so it would be nice if you paid attention. Thank you.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker.

Between 2003-04 and 2011-12, health care funding increased at an average rate of 6.1% annually, for a total increase of \$17.9 billion. This reflects the McGuinty government's commitment to increased access to quality care for all Ontarians. By working together, we improved health care in Ontario after years of neglect. These initiatives produced meaningful improvements for families—improvements like successfully reducing wait times for key surgical procedures. Ontario now has the shortest wait times in Canada, according to the Fraser Institute's 2011 report *Waiting Your Turn: Wait Times for Health Care in Canada*. Improvements like having more than 3,400 more doctors practising in the province: According to the Ontario Medical Association, over 2.1 million more Ontarians now have a family doctor, and we have created more than 12,600 nursing positions in Ontario. We are proud of these achievements, Speaker, but given the current fiscal challenge, funding for the health care system cannot continue to grow at past rates. Yet health care cost drivers such as demographic factors, demands for service and technological changes continue to exert pressure on the fiscal plan. For those reasons and more, the delivery of health care needs to be transformed to continue providing high-quality services that Ontarians need, expect and deserve.

Transforming Ontario's health care system is essential to managing the rate of health care spending growth to meet the government's commitment to balance the budget. That is why the McGuinty government is proposing strategies and actions announced to help maintain excellent health care for Ontarians while slowing the overall growth in health spending in Ontario to an average of 2% annually over the next three years.

How will we achieve this? As you know, Speaker, earlier this year, the McGuinty government released Ontario's action plan for health care, which established the road map for the transformation to sustainable and high-quality health care. The action plan is about better value for money. It is about creating a system that delivers health care in a smarter and more efficient way that will lead to better outcomes for Ontarians.

The plan is based on three key strategies to realize better value for money. They are: (1) shifting investments to where they have the greatest value and health care benefit; (2) preventing illness and helping Ontarians stay healthy and active by focusing on—

Intjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Vaughan is louder than the speaker. Could we keep it down, please?

Mr. Greg Sorbara: It's always been that way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pardon me?

Mr. Greg Sorbara: I said it's always been that way, Speaker.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker.

(2) preventing illness and helping Ontarians stay healthy and active by focusing on health promotion, including reducing childhood obesity and smoking rates;

and (3) providing better access to primary care, home care and community care so patients can receive the care they need in the most appropriate place and in a timely matter.

We are proposing further reforms to help us achieve our goals. These include reforms to physician compensation in Ontario. We recognize that doctors are integral to the health care system and are at the forefront of providing quality care to patients. Since 2003, the government has worked with doctors to increase access to care and reduce wait times. We are proud of what we have achieved together. Between 2003-04, and 2011-12, total payments to physicians increased by \$5.1 billion. Today, nearly one in 10 program expense dollars goes to physician compensation. That is why the 2012 budget reflects the government's plan to maintain total physician compensation at current levels through the next physician services agreement with the Ontario Medical Association. This is necessary for the government to meet its commitment to balance the budget.

We have all heard the expression that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We are embracing this way of thinking with a number of initiatives to meet the goal of keeping Ontarians healthy and productive, which will reduce future costs associated with preventable illnesses. As an example, obesity has a direct effect on the development of type 2 diabetes, and diabetes costs Ontario \$4.9 billion per year. Currently, approximately one in five youth in Ontario is overweight. To give you another example, tobacco continues to be the leading cause of preventable disease and premature death in Ontario, accounting for \$1.9 billion in health care costs and approximately 13,000 deaths each year.

To promote healthy living and support better management of chronic conditions, the McGuinty government is proposing the following actions:

- setting up a panel of advocates, health care leaders, non-profit organizations and industry partners to develop a childhood obesity strategy that will reduce childhood obesity by 20% over five years. I'm happy to note, Speaker, that Alex Munter, who is the chief executive officer of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, is one of the co-chairs of this council, somebody who has been a strong advocate for healthy living and health promotion for a long, long time;

0920

- increasing fines to those who sell tobacco to children and doubling enforcement efforts to address the supply of cheap, illegal tobacco in Ontario;

- providing all Ontarians with access to an online personalized cancer risk profile that will use medical and family history to measure cancer risk and then link those at higher risk to prevention supports, screening or genetic testing; and

- continuing to expand comprehensive screening programs for cervical, breast and colorectal cancer. Participants will be notified and reminded when they are due for their next screening.

Another way we are proposing to save money while improving health care services in Ontario is by providing

faster access to family health care. We know that improving access to family health care is essential for improving health care and managing overall health system costs. Total hospital operating funding is the largest area of health spending and has increased by an average of 5.1% annually since 2003. This rate of growth was partly required to make up for the deep across-the-board cuts of the 1990s. Treating patients in alternative care settings instead of hospitals, where appropriate, and ensuring access to primary care providers are critical elements of the government's plan to slow hospital expense growth.

Measures include:

- increasing access to doctors and nurse practitioners by expanding same-day and next-day appointments and after-hours care. This will help patients access primary care providers rather than going directly to hospital emergency rooms;

- integrating planning for family health care into the local health integration networks to leverage their expertise in helping patients navigate the health care system and access the right care in order to reduce hospital readmission rates;

- holding growth in hospitals' overall base operating funding to 0% in 2012-13 while continuing to increase investments in the community care sector by an average of 4% annually;

- enabling local health integration networks to promote a seamless coordination of the treatment patients need across various health care providers and providing more flexibility to shift resources to where the need is greatest;

- shifting routine procedures currently conducted in hospitals to non-profit community-based clinics where they can be performed faster, at the same high-quality standard and at a lower cost;

- increasing investments in home care and community services by an average of 4% annually for the next three years, or \$526 million per year by 2014-15, to better support those seniors and other Ontarians who could benefit from care provided in the community. We are doing this because ensuring that patients receive the right care in the right setting is essential for high-quality patient care and for managing health care costs;

- developing a new seniors strategy that will expand house calls, increase access to home care and provide improved care coordination;

- investments in chronic care services provided in the community to ease pressure on long-term-care homes' waiting lists and help reduce the number of alternate-level-of-care patients in hospitals.

And building on the significant investments made in long-term care since 2003 to create capacity in the sector, we are proposing to increase overall long-term-care home funding by 2.8% in 2012-13. Included in this growth is a 1% increase in direct care costs for long-term-care home residents. The government will help the sector manage this growth by providing home operators with greater flexibility to pay for services from within their current funding structure.

We are also proposing to change the way health care services are funded. This is a key component of the government's plan to transform health care. To support transformation, the McGuinty government is accelerating the move to a patient-centred funding model. This approach will be phased in over a three-year time frame and will help direct resources and expertise to where they are most needed to improve the value and quality of health care.

Under this approach, hospitals, long-term-care homes and community care access centres will be funded based on the types and volume of services and treatments they deliver. They will do this at a price that reflects the best practice and complexity of patients and procedures, while encouraging efficiency without compromising services and access. The model will drive provincial health care funding towards better patient outcomes by directing funding to efficient providers who offer better or more efficient services or treatments and improving quality through specialization.

Let me assure you, Speaker, that health care providers that face unique circumstances, such as small and rural hospitals, will continue to be treated uniquely, given their lower patient volume and critical local service delivery role.

We are also proposing reforms to create a fairer and more efficient drug system. The Ontario Drug Benefit Program, or ODB, helps seniors with the cost of their prescription drugs. All seniors are eligible for the ODB, regardless of their income level. This means that someone with an annual income of \$300,000 currently gets the same benefit as someone with an income of just \$30,000 per year. The 2012 budget proposes changes to ensure that the program is effective, properly administered and provides the most help to those in the greatest need. The fairness of the program will be improved by asking the highest-income seniors to pay more of their own prescription drug costs. We think that is only right, Speaker.

Under the current ODB program, seniors pay the first \$100 of their drug costs each year, plus a co-payment of \$6.11 for each prescription after the \$100 deductible amount. The \$100 deductible is waived for lower-income seniors, but they are required to pay an existing \$2 co-payment for each prescription. Starting in August 2014, high-income seniors will pay a new income-tested deductible. The change will affect only about 5% of senior ODB recipients, those seniors with the highest income and greatest ability to pay their own drug costs. About 3% of seniors will pay a little less, while the vast majority, about 92%, will pay the same amount.

Speaker, I would now like to tell you a little bit about the initiatives in education that we are proposing as part of Bill 55, the Strong Action for Ontario Act, 2012. Ontarians want a strong education system for their children because they recognize it is the best possible investment we can make for their future. Why is this so? Because investments in education and skills training play a critical role in preparing people for jobs that ensure future prosperity in the knowledge-based economy.

Ontarians with higher levels of education and skills have better employment prospects and higher wages, and contribute more in taxes.

Just like in health care, we have made great strides in education in the past eight years by working together. Class sizes are down. Graduation rates and test scores are up. And Ontario schools have been recognized as among the best in the world by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's program for international student assessment, and McKinsey and Co. Bill 55 continues this progress. It ensures adequate funding to meet this commitment to full-day kindergarten and its full implementation by September 2014. Right now, approximately 50,000 children in 800 schools across Ontario are benefitting from a full day of learning. By September 2012, full-day kindergarten will be available in an additional 900 schools, reaching approximately 120,000 students and representing nearly 50% of total program enrolment. By September 2013, about 184,000 will benefit from the program. When fully implemented, the program will reach approximately 250,000 children, giving them the best possible start as they grow to their full potential.

Class sizes are another success story of the McGuinty government's educational reforms. We know that smaller class sizes allow educators to focus more attention on each student, to improve results. That is why the McGuinty government is now funding an additional 13,600 teaching positions compared to 2003, with over 5,000 of these for smaller primary class sizes. As a result, more than 90% of early grades have 20 or fewer students, compared to 31% in 2003-04, and all early grades have 23 or fewer students, compared to 64% in 2003-04. The McGuinty government is committed to preserving the progress made over the past eight years. Funding will be maintained to preserve caps on primary class sizes and existing average class sizes at the junior and senior levels to ensure students in all grades benefit from more interaction with teachers.

0930

Speaker, I've outlined a few of the initiatives from Bill 55 that will help us achieve our goal of eliminating the deficit. Ontario's deficit in 2011-12 is now projected to be \$15 billion, an improvement of \$0.3 billion compared to the projection outlined in the 2012 budget. Of course, the 2011-12 actual results will be presented in the 2011-12 public accounts, which will be released later this year. Provincial deficits are now projected to be lower than forecast in the 2012 budget in each year between 2011-12 and 2016-17. The government is now projecting a \$0.5-billion surplus in 2017-18.

Returning to a balanced budget requires significantly reduced growth in program expenses. We recognize this and are prepared to take on this challenge. But let's be clear on this, Speaker: We must take strong action and we must do it now.

Following the release of the 2012 budget, S&P placed Ontario's AA- rating on negative outlook. DBRS confirmed our AA-low rating, while Moody's downgraded

the province's rating to AA2, with stable outlook. The ratings are a further reminder that Ontario has to meet its fiscal targets. In confirming the rating at AA low, DBRS noted that it "views the continuation of the fiscal recovery plan and the increasing emphasis on cost containment as an encouraging step in the right direction."

For the past three years, we have beaten our fiscal targets. I'm confident we will continue to do so in the future, but this is a tremendous task that lies ahead of us.

Allow me to quote the commissioner of the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, Don Drummond: "This should be viewed as an opportunity, not a problem. Ontario can and should have the best public services in the world; this is an opportunity to reach for that goal...."

"Ontario should become the first government to relentlessly pursue quality and efficiency in public services."

That is exactly what the contents of Bill 55 do, Speaker. We must examine and transform every aspect of what and how the government delivers programs and services with the goal of delivering the best public services in the world at a cost that Ontarians can afford.

In fact, we have examined and transformed Bill 55. Prior to second reading, we made adjustments to the bill. Let me highlight a few of these adjustments. We have proposed a temporary, new, deficit-fighting high-income-tax bracket for individuals earning more than \$500,000 annually. Under this proposed new tax bracket, the top statutory Ontario income tax rate on taxable income over \$500,000 would increase by two percentage points, from 11.16% to 13.16%. This change would generate additional revenue of \$280 million in 2012-13, \$470 million in 2013-14 and \$495 million in 2014-15. All of the additional revenue raised by this proposed measure would be used to reduce the provincial deficit and accelerate Ontario's plan to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. This deficit-fighting high-income-tax bracket will be eliminated once the budget is balanced by 2017-18.

Speaker, the federal budget was released on March 29, 2012, two days after the release of the 2012 Ontario budget, and it had impacts that we could not foresee. The federal budget proposed a number of tax changes that Ontario automatically parallels under federal-provincial taxation agreements, such as including employer contributions to group sickness or accident insurance plans in the income of an employee, and new international taxation and anti-avoidance rules. Together, these federal tax changes are projected to increase Ontario revenues by \$53 million in 2012-13, \$93 million in 2013-14 and \$105 million in 2014-15. All of the additional provincial revenues resulting from these federal changes will be used to reduce Ontario's deficit. As a result of these adjustments, Speaker, the forecast for Ontario revenues has increased by \$333 million in 2012-13, growing to \$600 million by 2014-15, well above the projections outlined in the 2012 budget.

Speaker, as my time comes to an end, I want to take the opportunity to encourage all members to vote for this

budget bill, Bill 55. The Strong Action for Ontario Act, 2012, is a series of smart choices to ensure a strong economy while protecting the gains we have made together in our education, health care and other public services. That is why I ask for the support of the House in passing this act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I want to inform you that I'll be sharing my time with the members from Nipissing and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

There are many ways that I could describe this budget; none of them is particularly good. But I will draw upon a very unlikely source this time for language on how to characterize this budget and this government.

During finance committee hearings, we have heard from many diverse organizations and interests discussing the proposed budget. One of them was Warren "Smokey" Thomas of OPSEU. In his presentation to the finance committee, he himself said that there are no opportunities for Ontarians in this budget, no jobs plan; that Liberals are "the masters of half-baked and half-delivered."

Now, I've had many surprising things happen to me in my life, but finding myself in agreement with the head of OPSEU has got to be top 10 on that list. It does, however, illustrate—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, folks. It's the last day. I understand it's the last day of school. The decibel level is going off the map, and we certainly wouldn't want to eject somebody on the last day, would we?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Timmins-James Bay, come to order. Next time I stand up, we'll be starting to name people. You don't want to get thrown out today, folks.

Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It does illustrate two important points. The first one is that even McGuinty allies have seen the light and are more than aware of this government's mismanagement of Ontario; and second, no matter where you are in terms of the political spectrum, the half-way measures, the mediocrity with which this government manages our province affects you.

There were themes that emerged on a consistent basis when we dealt with people who appeared before the Standing Committee on Finance; one of them was equality. We heard repeatedly about a book called *The Spirit Level*, which I'm very anxious to read, actually, Speaker, because what it talks about is the equalization or the redistribution of wealth on some level. I believe that wealth needs to be redistributed, but we're not Robin Hood here. We have a risk-and-reward system here, and so we have to find a way to get things into balance in a reasonable way. But we heard about it.

We heard about privatization, which this budget purports to address. What we're talking about when we use

the term "privatization" is procurement by alternate sources of services that the government needs. But what we saw in the ultimate budget was the watering down of this privatization to the point where, although our party stands for privatization of some services at the government level, we couldn't accept what we saw.

Arbitration, the same thing: a great need for reform of the arbitration system. But there we were being reported on as working hand in glove almost with the NDP on reform, where what the NDP wanted to do was gut what's already there rather than toughen up the measures that are required to deal with people in the broader public sector.

A jobs plan: Here's a place where the NDP and the Progressive Conservative Party can agree. There is no jobs plan. This budget has no jobs plan.

Spending: We in the province of Ontario, by virtue of the passing of Bill 55, are on a course to disaster. Spending is simply out of control, no matter what they tell you.

We also heard about revenue solutions, people appearing before the Standing Committee on Finance trying to tell us that our solution was going out and taxing people to a greater extent. Do they not understand that you cannot get blood out of a stone; that we have in this province a crisis in spending; that we have in this province a crisis on the jobs front, where almost 600,000 men and women, our peers here in the province of Ontario, don't have work and right now have very little hope of finding it?

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Yesterday we all heard the Minister of Finance talking about what? Trust, and the importance of trust. And he's right: Trust is important. If Ontarians could trust Dalton McGuinty, the situation might well be different. But the facts speak for themselves: health tax, eHealth, Ornge and a list of broken promises that we could carpet this Legislature with. What a tragedy. So listening to this government highlight the importance of trust is, at the very least, a very tough pill to swallow.

We all know where Ontario is right now: downgrades, negative outlooks from ratings agencies; a jobs and economy crisis, further deepened by a government overspending and overtaxing Ontario residents—many negative indicators; few positives.

It is because of this situation that Progressive Conservatives have consistently pushed this government to do better, and that is why we have called for action to create jobs. This is why we called for action to slash the deficit. This is why, when voting on the budget itself, on the amendments during committee, and when we vote on the budget bill today, there is only one criterion that we use to determine how to vote, and that is inherent in this question: Is this budget good for Ontario? The Liberal budget bill fails this crucial test. Liberal amendments introduced in committee also failed this test, and that's why the Ontario PC Party voted against them.

Let's talk about schedule 28. Schedule 28, for people watching—you might not understand the technical language—is basically the centrepiece of Bill 55, the budget—schedule 28, which the Liberals, as a result of their Premier's negligence in securing a deal in writing,

had to gut completely in order to satisfy the NDP. And what did the NDP do? They turfed schedule 28.

Let's talk about schedule 28. Let's do that. The main clause, dealing with the privatization or procurement of government services from alternate sources: We thought, in the Progressive Conservative caucus, that it was a good start, a first step in the right direction.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Mr. Peter Shurman: We thought it was a good first step. But the government feared for NDP support. Why? The government limited that schedule down to cover only ServiceOntario. The NDP voted for every single amendment to schedule 28 and then voted to throw out the schedule altogether. We voted against the government on every single amendment and we adopted schedule 28. Do you know what we had to do to do that? We bit the bullet—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Last warning to the Attorney General. Thank you.

Go ahead.

Mr. Peter Shurman: We in the Progressive Conservative caucus bit the bullet. We voted for a watered-down, namby-pamby version of schedule-28 privatization, something that we favour, something that would have given Ontarians a bang for the buck. The government in that particular case was at least on the right track, and we were there to support it. And that party, that had made a deal with the government, said no.

How can Ontarians trust in Dalton McGuinty's competence to represent their interests at the federal or the international table when he can't broker a deal to get support for his budget and accused the NDP of some kind of malfeasance or my party of absenteeism? How ridiculous is that? Premier, your attitude is why we chose the tack that we did.

Dalton McGuinty's failure to secure a written deal with the NDP on the budget is symptomatic of his failure to lead Ontario. Calling my leader names changes nothing. Instead of showing leadership and doing what is necessary, Dalton McGuinty has shown himself to be negligent and has pushed Ontario into harmful speculation over a possible election, creating even more insecurity at a time when what our province needed was stability and security and a path on which to move forward.

We said on March 27 that we could not support a budget with no spending plan appropriate to the crisis at hand—no jobs plan at all. Furthermore, his failure in handling his negotiations with the NDP resulted in an even weaker budget bill, if that were even possible—nothing for jobless people, nothing to address our ballooning interest payments, no meaningful approach to reduce the deficit.

Arbitration needs reform. The party to the left of me believes it needs reform. The party across from me believes it needs reform. Our party believes it needs reform. Everybody has a different view of what that reform is. I can say to this Legislature that when it came to the

elements of the budget that dealt with arbitration reform, yes, we didn't feel, in the PC caucus, that they went far enough, but we were prepared to accept them until, again, the government cut elements of the arbitration packages in a number of its schedules to a point where we could no longer support them. Why? To gain support from the NDP. And again, the NDP didn't vote for those particular amendments.

Privatization: same thing. I won't go into the description I gave of schedule 28, but that's what privatization encapsulates.

Then there's the wage freeze that we've been talking about, a wage freeze that we're told we don't need, and yet about 10 days ago we see a contract awarded by an arbitrator to workers within the TTC, giving them a 2% raise in each year of a three-year contract. That is well beyond the scope of what would have happened had there been a wage freeze on the broader public sector, and it shows you where this is all going to go if we don't step in and take some kind of bold action.

Budget measures that had the intent of reducing government spending, such as schedule 28, were rendered meaningless by the amendments that the Liberals introduced to appease the NDP, which at the end of the day wasn't appeased. For what? The NDP balked. Who will pay for this failure? Ontarians. Taxpayers.

Speaker, the budget bill that we are debating here today is a creation of the socialists to my left and the jokers to my right. Look up the lyrics to Stuck in the Middle With You some time. That song sums it all up. This creation is not a thing of beauty. Sorry, it's not.

At a time when Ontarians are tightening their belts and learning how to make do with less, the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty has tabled a budget bill that continues to increase government spending, a bill that has put every Ontarian, their children, their grandchildren into the largest debt that our province has ever had, and it's growing. Drummond summarized: \$30-billion deficit in 2017; \$411-billion debt by 2017. It's coming and we can all feel it.

Meanwhile, while Ontarians are losing jobs, getting smaller paycheques, having their shifts cut, the NDP want to give government employees raises that no other Ontarians have received for years or are likely to receive for years to come.

The Ontario PC—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You know what, you'll get your turn, so be quiet.

The Ontario PC Party and our leader, Tim Hudak, have taken a principled position on this budget from the very beginning. We have taken abuse, we have taken criticism, but we have stayed the course, and that is what good management does. It stays the course. We stood up for every Ontarian out there who has looked at what this government has done and what it now plans to do and shakes his or her head in helplessness and disbelief. That's leadership. That's leadership, and that is principle.

Mr. John Vanthof: Go Greek or go home.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, I listen to the people on my left, the NDP, laughing. It's just a big joke to them. I hope you people watching at home, I hope you media observing this know that the laughter is coming from the NDP. They think this is funny.

Mr. John O'Toole: They don't even vote.

Mr. Peter Shurman: They don't even vote, my colleague from Durham says. They don't even vote, but they think this is funny.

Back in October, the people of Ontario sent Dalton McGuinty to Queen's Park with a minority government. That was a clear message, Speaker, a very clear message. This budget bill and the convoluted process that got us to this point are proof that Dalton McGuinty did not heed that message. In fact, he showed us all that Ontarians' doubt in him is extremely well justified. Dalton McGuinty behaved like the absolute monarch that he believed he was. When he found that he was outranked, he started grasping at straws. When he didn't read the small print, he threw a hissy fit, a tantrum. He refused to collaborate, notwithstanding his frequent use of that word. The Liberal idea of collaboration is to demand that the opposition accept this weak budget or face the threat of an election.

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I want to tell you, Speaker, that in the last several days, the idea of collaboration that has been expressed by the Premier of Ontario since the date of the election last October actually found legs within the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. My friend the member from Ottawa Centre, at the outset of his comments this morning referred to it. I will not say that the time spent in hearings, and certainly not the time spent on clause-by-clause, was an easy time. I will say that it allowed for each party to express—on behalf of its own caucus, on behalf of its principles, on behalf of the people that all of our members represent—the views of the different parties. It allowed for the expression of opinions, for the opportunity to come back with a budget bill that, while not what they wanted, and certainly not what we wanted—and I've got to assume not what you wanted—that Ontarians will have a budget on which to operate, and they'll see the veracity of what is contained in my comments today.

It's only by threatening Ontarians with an election that Dalton McGuinty got his budget through—by the way, by our calculation, about 81% untouched. He wouldn't listen to our amendments, not in committee; his party was not interested in that kind of collaboration, wasn't even interested in doing what was or is best for Ontarians. Liberals were very focused on clinging to their seats, clinging to their salaries.

The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party is in this Legislative Assembly because we take our responsibility to represent our constituents, Ontarians, very seriously. That is our priority; that is our principle. Because of that principle, we voted against the budget, and we will vote against this budget bill today.

We love Ontario. I'm going to say it again: We love Ontario. I am sick to death of the intimidation by the other

side that, when we criticize what we see happening in the province of Ontario, that somehow or other that should be equated with a word like "slagging," that that should be in some way deemed to be negative on the province. The very fact of the matter is we are here in this Legislature, we are fighting this fight, I am speaking these words, and we are sitting in committees and trying to get the best deal possible, very specifically because we love Ontario so much, because we want Ontario to be what it once was and because we know that Ontario has the potential to go there. Ontario has the potential to go back to the top of the heap, but not if we operate on a financial plan like the one put forward, much less the one that we're being asked to deliberate on today.

In conclusion, now that Liberal hand-wringing and the NDP flip-flopping may finally be over, we should focus all of our energies on addressing the jobs crisis that Ontario is facing, on controlling spending, on reforming how we hire, how we pay, how we negotiate, how we procure, how we arbitrate with labour.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Progressive Conservative Party is ready to work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words about the budget that we'll be voting on in just a short time. Before I get into my speech, though, I think it's extremely important that I acknowledge the hard work of Michael Prue and Cindy Forster—the member for Beaches—East York and the member for Welland, our leads on committee; as well as the member for Timmins—James Bay, Mr. Bisson; our caucus, who have done a fantastic job over these last couple of weeks; and our staff, who have worked diligently to get us where we are today.

Speaker, three months ago, when we started debate on this budget, I was perfectly clear, and I can even quote myself: "This is a budget that leaves everyday people falling behind" in many, many crucial ways. That's what I've said from day one. And from day one, New Democrats had a huge decision to make.

For us, the very first step was really quite a simple step, Speaker. We actually decided to talk to people. We asked the people of Ontario to tell us what they thought, and they responded. We heard from tens of thousands of people. Most people simply didn't want an election, but many people think it's worth having one over this particular budget. Some people are worried about the lack of a jobs plan. Some are worried about the impact of cuts on our health care that this budget contains. Some feel they're asked to take yet another hit to the family budget while those who can most afford to pay keep getting all the breaks. Some are worried about a reckless plan to sell off our assets and create more Ornges in the province of Ontario. But as we went through this process of consulting with Ontarians, two things were very, very consistent: They feel this government hasn't listened to them, and they're worried that this budget will leave them falling further and further behind.

Listening was the first step. The second step was a little bit harder. We could either roll up our sleeves and work hard to try to get the results for people, results for everyday folks, or we could throw up our hands and simply walk away, as others have done in the process. We've seen all the chest-thumping from both the government side and the opposition benches: the blame games, the phony bravado and, in fact, the focus on ourselves. The people who sent us here got lost in the shuffle. Speaker, we're trying something a little harder: We're showing the people of this province that we're willing to make a minority work for them—not for the Liberal Party; not, frankly, for the New Democrats; for the people who actually sent us here.

It's no surprise to anybody that I don't work for Dalton McGuinty. I work for the people of this province, and they need someone in their corner because times are tough for them. It's no secret that the difference in this province between the very rich and the rest of us, that gap, continues to grow in Ontario. In fact, incomes right now are as concentrated as they were in the 1920s. The average hourly wage for working people in Ontario hasn't changed since 1991, after inflation is taken into account, Speaker. Most people in this province are getting by with less.

Of course, as we all know, there are always exceptions to the rule. Canada's CEOs are doing better than at any other time in our history. In fact, by 3 p.m. on January 1, they'd already collected more in pay than the average person earns in an entire year.

There's growing evidence, and I think there are actually some at least on a couple of benches in this House who agree with the evidence, that a society where people at the top have thousands and thousands more wealth than people at the bottom doesn't just hurt people at the bottom; it hurts everyone, even people at the top. Frankly, that's why we worked really hard for the fairness tax, a fairness tax that would ensure that the super-rich pay a little bit more. We won. That's New Democrats getting results.

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The people who sent us here need a stronger, better health care system. Fifty years ago, Tommy Douglas and the pioneers of medicare dreamed of a medical system where people didn't just receive treatments when they were ill, but they received support so they would not fall ill in the first place. When we fast-forward to today, we see that the quality of people's health is still dependent on the size of their wallet. That is unacceptable.

The proposed budget is going to lead to hospital closures in communities across Ontario. This is something we're very, very concerned about here in the New Democratic caucus. The fact is, closing local hospitals will mean that people who need critical care are going to end up travelling further and further and further just to get the care they need. Patients and their families have made it very clear that this is not where we should be cutting in Ontario.

The scandal at Ornge has taught us that there are too many people who see our health care system as a way to

make money instead of a way to help patients. That's simply wrong, and that's why we fought hard for increased funding for rural and northern health care, and we won. That's New Democrats getting results.

A better Ontario also has child care for families who need it. I had the pleasure of visiting a number of child care centres recently, most recently the Emmanuel at Brighton centre in Kitchener-Waterloo. When you look at what's happening in those centres, what's being offered to young children, it's very obvious that they're a necessary part of a healthy Ontario. That's why we fought hard to make sure centres like the one on Noecker Street in K-W would actually stay open. Speaker, we won that fight. That's New Democrats getting results for the people.

Ontarians said they were also disgusted—disgusted—and so was I, and many others in this chamber, by scandal after scandal after scandal in this government. When we look at the mess at Ornge, we know that things must change. Instead, we saw more of the schemes like Ornge in this budget bill, schemes like the privatizing of ServiceOntario.

We put forward amendments in that process of committee that would have kept ServiceOntario from turning into yet another Ornge in this province. We suggested that there should be oversight from the Auditor General, the Ombudsman and in fact this very Legislature.

On the very day the Auditor General said that the disaster at Ornge might have been prevented if there had been Auditor General oversight, Liberal and Conservative members voted against—voted against, Speaker—more oversight and voted in favour of the privatization of ServiceOntario, without that oversight.

Interjection: Shame.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That is shameful.

Let me be very clear: New Democrats do not believe that an agency which generates revenue, which provides services that are as public as public can be, like issuing drivers' licences and birth certificates, and which maintains private information on millions of Ontarians, should be in private hands. We don't believe it should be in private hands. It should be in public hands.

If this government wants to plod forward on poorly advised privatization, there should at least be oversight from independent officers of this Legislature and the Legislature itself. When it comes to oversight, I don't think anybody in Ontario has any question in their mind: More oversight is better. When it comes to privatizing ServiceOntario without any oversight and without any safeguards, just remember: You had a choice.

At a time when the results of poor oversight are front and centre with the Ornge scandal, we fought really strong and we fought really hard for stronger whistleblower protection, for real oversight from the Ombudsman, and real protection from reckless privatization schemes. Unfortunately, we lost some, but we did win some, and we're proud of our results. I'm proud of our results. We didn't get everything we wanted. We didn't get everything that the people need, in our humble opinion, but we had to put up with a heck of a lot of non-

sense to get what we did get. But I have to say I'm proud that we stood firm; we stood strong.

Notwithstanding everything that's been thrown at us, we did the right thing, and we've delivered on real change for the people of this province, and we won't allow that budget to be lost today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's an honour to rise in the Legislature today to debate, discuss and encourage some thought on the implications of Bill 55, the so-called Strong Action for Ontario Act.

This budget should strive to build a strong foundation for Ontario's economy, but unfortunately, the Liberal government has failed at its attempt to draft an effective budget because they didn't get the fundamentals right, and without a strong foundation, without the right fundamentals, Ontario's economy will not grow and may not even survive.

One essential element of a strong foundation is a government that represents the people. Throughout my first session here at Queen's Park, I have met with the people and have heard their perspective on what Ontario needs. I disagree with the Liberal government's approach of implementing legislation without consultation. The people know the challenges Ontario is facing because they live with them each and every day. It is because of my opposition to the Liberal government's heavy-handed approach to governing that I tabled my first private member's bill, Bill 76, entitled Ensuring Local Voices in New Casino Gambling Development Act. My bill, Bill 76, will require that a successful municipal referendum be completed prior to any new casino development.

You see, Speaker, local decision-making is a fundamental aspect of Canadian politics, and I am sad to say it is a value that has slowly faded over the last nine years under this Liberal government. Our province is now at a point where the people of Ontario are being told what to do, a top-down approach that has proven to fail. There is no longer consultation on the part of this government, and indeed voices are often silenced. Unfortunately, the budget here today does nothing to improve local input on important issues such as new casino development.

In early March, I hosted a community town hall in my riding that had a turnout of well over 300 people. A few weeks after hosting the community town hall along with my neighbour from Sarnia-Lambton, MPP Bob Bailey, I held community pre-budget consultations. We met with dozens of organizations and groups that represented a variety of social and economic interests. Some people drove over an hour and a half to be with us at that meeting, to have their voices heard.

Here at Queen's Park, I met with hundreds of stakeholder groups and individuals who have all told me the same thing, Speaker: Ontario needs a new direction. Things have to change, and the people have to be involved in that change. Unfortunately, this budget changes very little. Actually, it's really just more of the same tired and recycled approach that we've seen over the past nine years under this Liberal government.

In my riding, one of the many issues of concern is the issue of wind turbines and specifically the Premier's failed Green Energy Act. Our caucus has led three initiatives to stop the development of wind turbines until further comprehensive studies and consultations have been completed. These initiatives aimed to ensure that local voices were involved in the approval process of the establishment of wind turbines in their local communities.

The Liberal government voted down all three of these important motions. Again, we see the Liberal government not addressing the issues at hand and moving forward with their own agenda, with little or no consultation with the people of this province.

Unfortunately, again, these issues are not being addressed with Bill 55. Electricity prices for the average Ontario consumer have doubled under this Liberal government, and prices are projected to rise another 46% in the next five years. We all know the reason for the mass exodus of manufacturers from Ontario is a result of the unaffordable cost of hydro in this province. This is a huge factor in the high rate of unemployment in Ontario and is something that the Liberal government is also refusing to address in this budget.

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Skyrocketing hydro rates have also affected small businesses in my riding. Sobeys in downtown Wallaceburg, as I've mentioned on many occasions, announced they would be closing and laying off 70 employees. Company representatives have stated that the store is no longer a viable option, with a major factor being skyrocketing energy costs. This budget does nothing to resolve these issues, and I simply cannot support legislation that does not address the core issues facing our families and facing our province.

Another issue that men and women in Ontario are currently facing is a poorly designed decision to end the successful slots-at-racetracks program and, as a result, destroy a viable and successful industry. I have travelled across Ontario visiting racetracks and meeting with track owners, farmers, horsemen and local leaders. There is great potential for this industry to flourish, but our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, has pulled the carpet out from underneath the feet of the people in the horse racing industry and left 60,000 men, women and small business owners with no options and absolutely no future.

Worst of all, again there were no industry consultations on behalf of this government. The Minister of Agriculture has been muzzled by his Liberal colleagues, and the finance minister has made regular offensive remarks targeted at the industry. He has shown no respect for these hard-working men and women. This is a result of nine years of arrogance settling in.

As of right now, the government has promised up to \$50 million in transition funding over three years. This does not come anywhere close to a transition plan. The industry is calling it a joke. I would have liked to see the current Bill 55 address some of these concerns as well.

Since February, we have seen several credit downgrades because the proposed Liberal budget does not do

enough to rein in overall spending. I have with me a recent report done by the Fraser Institute entitled the finance minister's "missed opportunity." The article highlights how there are no overall spending cuts in this budget. I have with me a quote from page 17 of the article: "Rather than strike at the root of the problem to close the budget gap, Duncan chose to tinker with the growth rate in spending—that is, he will still increase spending, but at a slower rate."

Currently, the Liberal government is spending \$1.8 million more per hour than it takes in. This budget increases spending in 14 of 24 government ministries, which together account for more than 80% of total government spending in the province of Ontario. How can a government justify this kind of spending when Ontario is headed toward a \$30-billion deficit and a \$411-billion debt?

An Ontario PC government would have brought in an immediate mandatory public sector pay freeze—no exceptions, no special rules—and a plan to fix our broken public sector salary arbitration system to respect the ability of taxpayers to pay the bills, to respect local economic circumstances.

While private sector unemployment has reached over half a million people, public sector salaries have increased by 46%. Currently, there are almost 80,000 public sector employees earning \$100,000 or more. By comparison, when the Liberals were first elected in 2003, there were only 20,000 public sector workers earning over \$100,000 a year. That is the growth in the size and cost of government that has happened under this Premier and under this scandal-plagued government.

Every business owner knows he must make tough choices to keep costs and revenues in balance. The current government refuses to make these difficult choices, because they lack leadership and direction. They take the easy road, choosing instead to increase debt and, of course, the Liberal way, increase taxes.

Speaker, the party opposite, the current government, has no jobs plan. They have no deficit-control plan; they have no plan to deal with our crippling debt. Instead, the Liberal government is more concerned about threatening an election and playing out a political soap opera with the third party than they are with putting forward a respectable and sound budget bill for this House to consider.

So I will continue, and my colleagues beside me as well, to promote our positive PC plan to reduce the overall size and cost of government, to build and grow our economy with new jobs, and we will ensure that Ontario will lead again.

The proposed budget fails to take the action required to prevent a \$30-billion deficit and does nothing to create jobs and grow our economy. Over the last eight months since the election, the economic state of Ontario has not improved. Unfortunately, it is a poorer place, Speaker. Overspending continues when, instead, we need urgent action to get our fiscal house in order. Even with this budget, there is still a looming \$30-billion deficit. Spending is up \$1.8 billion, not down. The debt is up \$23

billion, not down. There is nothing here to foster private sector job creation—just more taxes on businesses, more taxes on entrepreneurs who want to invest and create jobs right here in the province of Ontario.

I will be voting against this budget. I encourage my colleagues in this House to vote with the PC caucus. Vote against this budget, and oppose this wasteful and unfocused direction that Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal cabinet are taking us in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair, and I appreciate the way you are maintaining order this morning.

We just sat through a number of days in a very difficult process. The budget process is not an easy one. Any of the members of the committee can tell you how difficult it is to deal with a thousand votes, how difficult it is to try to make things connect, how difficult it is in a tense environment to be civil.

First of all, I want to thank the Chair, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, who was probably the best person to pull that off. Although he and I have had our differences over the years, I must commend him for the way in which he managed the very difficult process.

I would also like to thank my colleagues on all sides of the House who sat on the committee. Although we did not always agree, with one or two very small exceptions we were always civil and kept the whole debate above name-calling. That was very good.

I thank my colleague the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for bringing in some delightful baked goods yesterday, which she shared with all members of the committee, as I had tried to do in the previous days with members of the committee, because it's a collegial experience, and it's a difficult one.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: You should bring in wine.

Mr. Michael Prue: You can't drink wine in committee, or I would have brought it, and it would've helped. I would have brought the wine in for the member from Vaughan, first of all.

This difficult process was made very much worse because there were people on the outside who were interfering. When the Premier started calling the leader of the NDP names, it wasn't helpful to the process. When the finance minister weighed in and said all kinds of unkind things that simply weren't true, and then the member from Vaughan weighed in and started yelling about an election and being stabbed in the back—when I watched these hurtful, horrible things on television, I thought, if only they had kept their nose out of it.

The committee was doing the right things. Today, when we stand in here, we all talk about the right things that the committee did.

Please, member from Vaughan, tell the Premier and the finance minister, if we do this next year, to butt out. We don't need your two cents on the television. We need to do our job, and we need to do it right. The members from the Liberal Party were doing the right thing in committee, and they were doing it without your interference.

I want to say we are proud, in the New Democratic Party, to have stood up for our principles. There were many pressures, and we did not succumb to those pressures. We did not succumb to the pressure—"It's our way or the highway. Do what we want or there's going to be an election"—because we didn't think that what was being said was right. What was right was to get results. What was right was to vote on those 1,000 votes we had to take through amendments, schedules and everything else over three days, and we did it. In the process, we stood up for our values.

1020

I am heartened to see that my colleague the member from Thornhill, who doesn't like this budget, at least wants to run out and buy a copy of *The Spirit Level*. I would recommend the book to him and to the maybe dozen people who came before us and talked about economic equality and how Ontario will work better if there is economic equality, because, as a New Democrat, with all my heart I believe that. I think the committee heard some very valuable insights.

In the end, we voted for the majority of the budget and we voted against certain things. What I voted against, and what I believe was the right thing to do, was the whole gamut, the whole effort of this government to go along the privatization route. They said they wanted to do this to save money.

I was a mayor, and we had an experiment in East York about privatization. We privatized half the garbage, and we left half in public hands. The first year, it was cheaper doing it private, sure, because they undercut everybody to get the contract. The second year, it was the same price. The third year, it was cheaper on the public side. The fourth year, the business was sold to another private company because they weren't making any money. In the fifth year, not a single private company bid for the contract, because they could not compete with the public service. It taught me a very valuable lesson. For those people who think privatizing ServiceOntario is going to save money somehow, I will tell you it is not.

Yesterday, in the midst of all this, a letter arrived in my office from 3M. Well, 3M wants to take the licence plates and all the licensing—take it and make a huge profit off it. I am very mindful—very mindful—that this service cannot and will not be the same. I have nothing against 3M; they're in there to make a profit, just like any company. But I don't want my public records to be given out to a private company controlled in the United States. I think my licence statistics and everything else need to be here.

I have this whole thing against privatization, and I have no problem with saying that I voted against those schedules that will lead to privatization—6, 7 and 13. I am disappointed that 28, of course, passed. But, notwithstanding, it will be much more difficult for this government to privatize in the future.

I do not believe in gutting environmental protection. Many times in this Legislature we have been chided for gutting environmental protection, but this Bill 55 had all

the hallmarks of doing exactly that. In the end, I am thankful that the Liberal members on the committee voted against that schedule too—took it out, gone—because it was the wrong thing to do.

There were 69 schedules, Mr. Speaker, and of the 69 schedules many are now deleted. It was not just the NDP that voted to delete them, it was not just the Conservatives that voted to delete them; in some cases, it was the Liberals themselves that voted to delete them. That was the right thing, and the committee did the right thing in the end.

As a result, I believe we have a better bill—not a perfect bill, not a New Democrat bill, not something I would have proposed if I was the finance minister, but a better bill all the same. Even the finance minister, in all the bluff and bluster of the last few days that this was going to cost billions of dollars to the treasury, what happened in committee on Thursday, last week—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It was \$3 billion, all told.

Mr. Michael Prue: —\$3 billion—now concedes and says that the budget still works, that the revenues are unchanged and the expenditures are unmoved. So, you know, I have to question all that bluff and bluster coming from the sidebar and the side rooms while the committee was doing exactly the right thing.

I want to just talk for a couple of minutes on the leader of the NDP, Andrea Horwath. She is a woman of considerable strength. There are people who lead parties in other parts of the province who would have succumbed to the bullying that took place this weekend. There are people who would have fallen for the threats of elections, who would have backed down, who would have said, "We are not going to do what we are going to do." But she was not one of them.

She refused to cave in to those threats and those intimidations. She refused to cave in to the sabre-rattling about an unnecessary election. Even though we, as New Democrats, have polled some 30,000 people in the lead-up, knew that people did not want an election, she would not budge. As a leader, she stood firm for her principles, and she took the actions that were consistent with the statements that she has made over many months. She stated time after time after time, in newspaper and television interviews, that New Democrats would go to the committee and would make changes to the bill, and that's precisely what we did.

There should have been no surprise from anyone in the government. There should have been no surprise and people saying they were stabbed in the back, because that simply was not true. The fact is, we said we were going to change the bill, and we changed the bill. We changed the bill consistent with those things that we believe in, and we changed the bill with the support of Conservative members and of Liberal members where they saw that it was wrong.

The people recognize the strengths, and they recognize the fact that we ensured that there will be no election. And because there will be no election, they will have a budget which is a better budget than they would have

had, had New Democrats not been there. The people recognize the strengths of our leader, and they recognize her will to make minority government work and her will to make sure that this Legislature succeeds.

We have processes in place to make sure it succeeds, and one of the best processes we have is the committee system, where members of all parties work together in the end to produce the results that the people of Ontario want. Would that in the future, members of the executive council, members who wish they were still on the executive council, would leave the committees alone to do the right job, because in the end I know that those people will be standing up for the budget as the Liberal backbenchers who did all the work over the last days will be doing the same thing.

I want to conclude by thanking the House leaders and staff, not only from the NDP, although I worked closely with them; they did a phenomenal job. But to watch the House leaders and staff in the committee rooms; to watch the all-party consent that those staff could sit with us as we went through 1,000 separate votes to make sure everybody was understanding; to watch the Liberal and the Conservative and the NDP staff sit there and talk to each other and figure out what was happening and advise us on how we could make compromises in votes—it was truly brilliant to watch.

This is the way government should work. This is the way minority government has to work. And if we come back next year to do it all again, please make sure we do it right, and please, no more bluff and bluster.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The sound of one hand clapping.

Good morning, Speaker. I rise to address Bill 55. This budget does nothing to bring relief to the 600,000 unemployed in Ontario. This budget does nothing to reduce the size and cost of government. This budget provided an opportunity to tackle those two very important issues. Instead, this budget compounds the problems. Spending goes up, the deficit goes up, taxes go up, unemployment goes up, energy rates go up. The only thing that has gone down is our credit rating.

1030

Speaker, our province today is upside down. Ontario was once the engine of Confederation. I was proud to grow up in an Ontario where the world was at our doorstep. There wasn't anything we couldn't do if we wanted to. Today, we have become a have-not province. That did not happen by accident. We let the Liberal government take over the province, and they went on a taxing and spending spree that has caused almost irreparable damage.

When they took over in 2003, our budget was \$65 billion. Today our budget has almost doubled, to over \$125 billion. They taxed us, and then they spent our money. Then they spent even more than they took in, so now we are running a deficit. In fact, it took 136 years for 23 Premiers to build up a \$150-billion debt, and it took Dalton McGuinty only eight years to double it.

This budget does nothing to rein in the deficit, Speaker. It only adds to our debt. Instead of reining in spending, the government looks to increase revenues. They're adding taxes and cancelling the legislated tax reductions to business. These are the two things that will kill jobs in Ontario.

Speaking of things that have doubled under Dalton McGuinty, have you looked at your energy bill this month? You will note that it has more than doubled since Dalton McGuinty took over in office. His failed energy plan has caused 300,000 manufacturing jobs to be lost in Ontario. In northern Ontario alone, we lost 10,000 resource sector jobs. Sixty mills have closed. Xstrata Copper in Timmins, the single largest user of power in Ontario, shut down, terminated 670 employees and opened just across the border in Quebec for cheaper power. And where did Quebec get some of that power?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Here's the rub.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: That is the rub. Our failed green energy plan supplied it to them. You see, Speaker, we overpay for companies to produce power from wind. As most of that power is generated at night, when our demand is low, we then pay Quebec and the US to take our surplus power. The Auditor General told us that in the last few years we've paid \$1.8 billion to do just that. In fact, in the first 10 months of last year, it cost us \$420 million—in the first 10 months alone. So those Quebec and US companies then use that cheap power to lure companies like Xstrata and others out of Ontario and into their laps.

Speaker, if it wasn't so sad, it would be laughable. But it's not. It's tragic; so tragic that we now have 600,000 in total unemployed in Ontario. We lost a further 31,000 full-time jobs just last month. This is the 65th consecutive month that Ontario's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average. Speaker, this budget does absolutely nothing to bring any sign of relief to those unemployed. In nine months, all this government has done is compound the problem.

Earlier, I spoke of all the things that are going up: spending, the deficit, taxes, energy, unemployment, all going up. What has gone down, Speaker? Our credit rating. It's bad enough, actually, that the province's credit rating has tumbled under this Liberal government, but what is worse is that it's taking others down with it. Other provincially funded bodies with excellent credit ratings saw their ratings drop, as they could not have a better rating than their guarantor, the province.

We saw Hydro One see its senior unsecured debt rating fall from A1 to AA3. Six other linked issuers also saw their debt rating cut, including the Hospital for Sick Children, 55 School Board Trust, the Ontario School Boards Financing Corp., Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corp., the University of Ontario and the University of Ottawa. Speaker, my own hometown, the city of North Bay, one of the few cities in all of Ontario that had an A1 credit rating, was also dragged down by the province.

These organizations did nothing on their own to deserve that downgrade. The changes in their ratings are

solely as a result of the downgrade issued to the province of Ontario.

While I'm talking about home, let me talk about another thing that has gone down, Speaker. As I mentioned earlier, Ontario was once the engine of Confederation. If we were the engine, then certainly northern Ontario was the fuel for that engine. The lumber, the minerals and the brainpower all fuelled the once-powerful Ontario. Ten years ago, we were ranked number one in the world in mining. Today, we have dropped to number 19.

When diamonds were discovered in Ontario, what's the first thing this government did after the mine was under construction? They introduced a diamond tax. Now we have chromite discovered in the Ring of Fire. You can presume what's coming next, Speaker: Is the government contemplating a chromite tax? Do you think the mining companies worldwide even trust this Liberal government?

To make matters worse, the Liberal government has passed the Far North Act, which restricts mining and forestry in the north and makes over half of northern Ontario a virtual museum. Now you can understand how we've fallen to number 19 in mining and why forestry has fallen even further.

This brings me to the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. Let me say that I do not support the fire sale of Ontario Northland. Everyone knows that the ONTC cannot continue the way it is, but a fire sale is not the answer for Ontario Northland.

Speaker, there are better days ahead for Ontario. Our party has provided this government with ideas to create jobs, to reduce the size and cost of government and to tackle the jobs and debt crisis. This government has rejected all of our ideas to do this. We have a plan, a plan that can put Ontario on the right footing and on a path to real recovery.

We join our leader Tim Hudak and together we continue to take our message to the people every single day. We will reduce the size and cost of government and we will create a climate for private investment in Ontario. We will be number one again. We will lead Confederation again.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm rising to speak on the budget bill, Bill 55. I've been involved in many budget processes over the last 20 years at a municipal and regional level, but none like the marathon that we just participated in over a period of seven days: four days of deputations from over 80 different individuals and agencies and three days of clause-by-clause amendments, of which there were 215. Only a very few of those were withdrawn or ruled out of order, so I actually congratulate the legislative staff for all the hard work that they did preparing all of those amendments and putting them in order in a way that made some sense to us.

It was a good way as well for me to learn, only having been here for six or seven months, about a variety of

companies and agencies that are involved with the province and that had an interest in coming and making deputations to the finance committee. I also learned very quickly about the legislative process in that seven-day period.

1040

I especially want to thank the member from Beaches—East York, the pro from the finance committee, for his guidance. On a number of occasions he had to nudge me to vote because I was so entrenched in what I was reading that I almost forgot. So he did a good job keeping me on track as well.

I want to thank all the members, though, of the finance committee, because they all operated in a very professional manner, with the exception of one or two little blips. It was very professional. It was very courteous. We are in a very contentious process and environment in a minority government, right? So I think everybody did really well, and they should be congratulated for that.

For me, it was especially heartening to see individuals and groups of people—and there's two in particular. There was one individual, a man from Toronto—an architect, I believe—who came forward, and there were two elderly women who came forward who had actually been in a group—I can't remember their name at the moment. Since 1949, they've had this group, and they actually go out and advocate for those people living in poverty, to raise the standard of living for people who live in Toronto. They held a public town hall meeting at the St. Lawrence Market prior to the budget bill and they had several hundred people out. They came and they made a presentation, along with this architect, and they talked about how, when low-income people and people living in poverty do well, we all do well. They had no self-interest. They were only there to have their say, make themselves heard and hopefully try and improve the lives of people who live in this province. So it was really good that people would give of their time and of themselves to come out and make those kinds of statements. They talked about increasing social assistance and about how people on social assistance are living so much below the poverty line. They talked about improving the situation for those living in poverty, and they talked about increasing the minimum wage to make sure that all Ontarians are doing well.

I want to thank the staff, particularly of the NDP caucus. Those people worked many, many hours, long hours into the evenings and into the night and over the weekend, and they did a great job giving us advice and support all throughout the process.

It's important, though, to thank the thousands of individuals who emailed us, who called us, who wrote us letters and who came and made deputations so that we could mould the amendments to improve this budget. Did everyone get what they wanted? No, we didn't. I'm sure the Liberals will say that they didn't, and I'm sure that the PCs—well, we've heard that they didn't. But this is a minority government, and in a minority government we need to negotiate with each other so that we all get what

we want to improve the lives of people who live in this province. That's what we did over the last 10 or 12 days. We worked together to make sure that we all could actually live with this budget.

Now, there's been a lot of press in the last few days that our leader spoke to and that the member from Beaches—East York spoke to, and I just wanted to get on the record and make it clear that from the very beginning, from the budget motion, our message was that we would allow the budget motion to pass in order to get the budget bill to committee so that we could make amendments. We were not going to be living with the budget bill as it was, and that was our message. We're on the record. You can check any newspaper in this province. That was the message that came from all of our members. So for the government to kind of interfere in the process in the last four days I don't think was very appropriate. But at the end of the day, we stood strong. We stood together, and we made some amendments to that bill that actually will improve the lives of some people who live in this province—not all, but some. We achieved some increases in social assistance. We preserved daycare spaces in this province.

Andrea Horwath, our leader, is known as the Steel-town Scrapper. There's a reason that she actually has that name. She stood strong, she stood firm, and we were able to make those amendments to that budget.

We're still very concerned, Speaker. The NDP are still very concerned about our health care. Now, we know that the government has said they want to preserve health care, they want to preserve education, and they want to create jobs in this province. But we think that a 0% increase in funding to public hospitals is going to result in reduction in services, it's going to result in layoffs, and it's going to result in closures of community and rural hospitals in this province. We don't think that's a good thing.

We also are still very concerned about privatization. We don't believe in privatization. We believe in strong public services for this province. We believe the government needs to administer its own services, with oversight, with transparency and with accountability, and not pass it off to the private sector so that then we can say we're not to blame when something goes wrong.

The member from Beaches—East York talked about waste management when he was the mayor. I have experienced similar situations in the Niagara region, where waste management was done, for example, by each of the cities. Then it came under regional control. The big guys actually outbid the little guys. Then suddenly, there are no little guys in that operation anymore. Then three or four years later, the price of waste management skyrockets. Who pays? The taxpayers, at the end of the day. The little guys are out of business. The little guys that were actually paying decent wages to their employees are gone. Now the big guys are in there. The price of waste management has gone up. The workers are being paid minimum wage. That's privatization in that area. That's one of the reasons that we don't support privatization.

Anyway, I'm getting the sign here that I need to sign off.

While we didn't get everything that we wanted, we were able to make some positive amendments to the budget, and we look forward to the next budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Further debate? Last call.

The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm pleased to add to the debate my synopsis of possibly what a new member has witnessed and observed throughout the nine months that we've been here—what I've seen and what I've heard. Ultimately, it starts at the beginning. To quote the Dickens classic *A Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Of course, here we are at the end.

What I witnessed was a government that, from the outset, failed to listen. Immediately in the process of building a budget, we saw a government that couldn't get its act together in forming committees, which ultimately led to a real backlog in the process, and then outsourced the process of developing a budget to one guy. That was Mr. Don Drummond, through the Drummond process. You took every aspect of Drummond's recommendations, you digested them, and you regurgitated them back into the budget that we found as Bill 55.

One of those factors—I mean, let alone the attack on public sector workers, the teacher-bashing that we saw in there, the firefighter-bashing that we've seen within Bill 55—was an attack on rural Ontario and our agricultural sector with the dismantling of the slots-at-racetracks program—

Interjections.

1050

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Could I have your attention, please? This is really getting loud. I cannot even hear the member, let alone see him, because people are standing in the way. So I'd appreciate a little bit of co-operation. We've only got a few minutes to go until D-Day, so let's please be quiet. Thanks.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker.

I do have just a brief time to talk here. You know, there's been a lot of discussion on whether this province has a spending problem or a revenue problem, and ultimately, we'll be returning back to our ridings in short order. I would suggest that this Legislature has a listening problem. Go home, go home, shut your mouths, and listen to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Essex will withdraw the last statement.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I withdraw. I will say close the channels of your oratory organs. Fermez, fermez. Go home and do some listening. None of us here produces anything. We produce words; we don't even produce a pencil. Go home and talk to the real people in your ridings who make things at the end of the day, who produce tangible products that help this economy, that help our province. Go and listen to those people.

That's what you should have done at the beginning of the election in October. You failed to do that. You have another chance. Come back in the fall and tell us what you heard. If not, you will have failed again, absolutely failed again. Go talk to the residents of rural Ontario, find out how your decision on dismantling the slots-at-racetracks program is going to devastate the rural regions of this province, and come back with a firm resolve to actually fix the problems that you created.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: I rise to speak today on Bill 55, on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming-Cochrane who put me here, and in this case, on behalf of a lot of the residents in northern Ontario.

A lot of people complain that this government hasn't created jobs and hasn't lost jobs, and I represent Bob McMurdy from Mohawk Garnet, who is building a mine—125 jobs. Bob's problem is that he can't get hydro services to the line, and right now I'm trying to work with the Minister of Energy to get that done.

We've got True North plywood. What they need is money for training for the employees, and I'm working with the Minister of Colleges and Universities to get that done. That's what we got elected to do here. We didn't get elected to just argue. We got elected to get things done.

Is this budget doing everything that we want it to do? Absolutely not. Is it our budget? Absolutely not. There's one issue, though—you know, it's in the budget, it's not in the budget—and that's ONTC. We put in the negotiations. It wasn't in the budget. We put it there, at risk to ourselves, because it's an important issue to the north. It's a defining issue in the north. We didn't get it in those negotiations. We tried to put it in committee, and it's important to note that we weren't expecting support from the Liberals in committee, but we were hoping for some support from the Conservatives. We didn't get it.

But ONTC is not going away. The last time we fought for ONTC, it was against Mike Harris and the then Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Tim Hudak. We beat him, and I'd like to note that ONTC is not going away. Why is it not going away? Because, to northerners—the transcontinental railway, everyone knows the last spike was something that united the country. It was a long time ago. It united the country. And this announcement, without our input, without any chance for northerners to help make the decision, it's like cutting the last tie between the north and the south. We really feel alienated, and it's not a threat, it's not something—but you talk to people on the street, and what the McGuinty government really has to make a long-term decision on is, does it want to be going down in history as the government that cut the last ties to northern Ontario? Because that's what's happening.

To those people who say that all we have to do is vote against the budget and you'll stop the sale of ONTC, we fought against Mike Harris and against Tim Hudak the last time, and they haven't made any sign that they would

support us if we brought them down this time. So in essence, it's better to deal with the devil you know than the one you don't. But I'm telling you—and again, it's not a warning—this is one of those decisions that is truly, truly alienating the people of northern Ontario, and unless we do something, we're at a point of no return. So I will help this budget pass, but it has huge problems. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Finally, the member from Vaughan has decided to stand up. Good.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a rare opportunity for me. As my colleagues in this Legislature know, since stepping down from the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Folks, I know it's the last day of school, but could we keep it down, please? At least give the member the ability to say something. I can't hear him. I can't hear a word, and I have good hearing. That tells you how loud it is in here. So please keep it down.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, this is a rare opportunity for me. Generally, I leave legislative time to my colleagues in our party who are more articulate and have greater insight, but I relish the opportunity to be the final speaker on this very important budget bill.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a bit of a political crisis over the weekend. In my remarks I want to say a few words about that crisis. I want to express my joy that that crisis has now passed, that very soon in this Parliament we will vote in favour of the budget and, most importantly, that the budget will pass. That budget is going to provide a very firm economic foundation to the continuing economic recovery that we are enjoying in Ontario. As the Bard said, sir, "All's well that ends well."

I want to begin by congratulating all the members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. I want to particularly point out the Chair, the member from Mississauga-Streetsville, who did such an excellent job; my friend from Ottawa Centre, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance; the member from Thornhill, who contributed greatly; and, of course, the member from Beaches-East York, who is a seasoned member of that committee and understands the province's finances very well indeed.

What really happened since Thursday morning? Ontarians right across the province knew for weeks and months that there had been an agreement among this governing party and the New Democratic Party to let the budget pass. That was the agreement, and 13 million Ontarians knew that. On Thursday afternoon, all of that changed. On Thursday afternoon, the New Democrats, with the support of the Tories, began to remove very significant sections of the budget bill, and we saw that—perhaps we were wrong—as a fundamental breach of that agreement.

As a result of that, our Premier did exactly what he needed to do. He needed to inform the people of this province that if the budget did not pass, the government

must resign and there must be an election. This is not a preference. This is parliamentary tradition for hundreds and hundreds of years.

Well, to the credit of, I think, everyone in this House and particularly the members of SCFEA, we got over that difficulty. But I'm here to suggest, sir, that there might have been a slightly better way to avoid this crisis. It's a very simple solution. It's called, pick up the phone. If the leader of the third party, the New Democratic Party, knowing full well that we were relying on her commitment—if her party decided it was time to change certain sections of the bill, that's their prerogative. I simply say to her, next time, pick up the phone. Pick up the phone. Call the Premier. Call the Minister of Finance. Call the House leader. Pick up the phone and simply say, "I know we have an agreement, I understand we have an agreement but our party needs some changes. We need some amendments." Maybe then we could have called a little bit of a time-out and had a discussion, and those changes could have been put on the table, and we could have avoided that crisis.

1100

But instead of that, the strategy was to say, "We had it all along in our minds that at the last minute we were going to change this bill." I say—my advice, and I've been here a little while—is, simply pick up the phone.

I've got a good example of how that actually works very well, and I'm going to tell this House about picking up the phone with my friend from Trinity-Spadina.

During the original negotiations, he picked up the phone and called me. I picked up the phone; I called him. We had three meals together. We had coffee several times, and we spoke on the phone almost every day. We were not responsible for the negotiations. We had no authority, but it was in his interest and my interest that we work out an arrangement. As a result of those negotiations—and I say to my friend from Trinity-Spadina, I think we played a small part. We helped in that process.

This House is about to pass this budget. In listening this morning to the speeches, I must say I've been a little bit saddened. I just want to put it on the record. My good friend from Thornhill made a very articulate speech, but it's the classic, "All I want to say is how horrible the Liberal government is, what terrible governing they're doing." You could have had the opportunity today to say, "I think we all did a pretty good job in this Legislature in getting this budget passed."

I listened to the leader of the third party. She could have had an opportunity to say, "I actually like the result. I actually like the idea of the way in which we work together." But instead, if you listen to her remarks, all she said was, "What a wonderful job I did. What a wonderful job my party did." And that's okay; that's fair game in here. I had just thought that, this morning in particular, the mood might have been a little bit different, and I got a little bit of that mood in listening to the remarks of my friend from Beaches-East York.

This is a good day for Ontario. This is a very good day for Ontario. As we move towards this vote, having

passed a budget shortly that creates a strong regulatory and legislative foundation for an economic recovery that we are seeing in the north, the south, the east and the west—jobs created in every part of the province—I want to take this opportunity, in the final words that will be spoken before we vote, to congratulate the 106 members of this Legislature, who, notwithstanding the partisanship, saw a higher calling; notwithstanding the urge to win and to be seen to win, saw the opportunity to do the right thing and make sure that this government has a budget and this government has a financial plan and that there will be no election this fall.

Secondly, I want to congratulate the 13 million Ontarians who seemed to get a message to us to do the right thing. They influenced our decision-making, and I want to express our gratitude perhaps on behalf of everyone for the messages that they sent.

Finally, I want to congratulate, in a very personal way, the work that my friend and my successor the Minister of Finance has done over the course of the past nine months. I know the burden of that job. I know how much it takes to make sure you get it right, and I say to my colleague the Minister of Finance that we in this Legislature and Ontarians across the province thank you, sir, and our Premier for your dedication.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy has moved third reading of Bill 55. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

This vote is deferred until after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker. A couple of things. One is that because this is an abnormal day, I didn't have an opportunity to introduce somebody who's very important to me. My 85-year-old father-in-law has never been in the Ontario Legislature before, and he's here with us today for question period.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I've got to say, Speaker, that his name is Norman Stoll. That's the longest standing ovation I've seen in this Legislature for a visiting person, and I want to thank him for being here.

MEMBERS' STAFF

Mr. Peter Shurman: Further to that point of order, I want to say something that hasn't been said by anybody. Over the course of the last weeks, things have been particularly difficult around here. Some of us get praised and some of us get brickbats thrown at us. What never gets said is that we all have staffs who work behind us. I have four; I think everybody else has about the same.

These people put in countless hours and incredible toil, do remarkable work, and we never say thank you enough. So I want to say thank you to my staff and to the staffs of everybody who works on behalf of this Legislature.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Parkdale—High Park on a point of order.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes, actually, an introduction, as well: to Melissa and Nathan Murray, who are good friends who are visiting on this momentous occasion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will make a call on this. There was an agreement on how we are to proceed, and it did not include the introductions portion. So that we can continue to fulfill what has been agreed upon, I would ask all members to not do these introductions.

MEMBERS' STAFF

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): However, I will accept the one part of a point of order that thanks staff, because I am one who believes that we should always be thanking our staff, regardless of political party. So I thank the member for bringing that to our attention. It's appropriate to thank those who have worked so hard.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Premier: Premier, eight months ago, Ontario voters sent us here to take on two major challenges: address the growing debt crisis in the province and help the economy create good private sector jobs—the kind of jobs that will be middle-class jobs, build security for families and make our province strong again. But Premier, sadly, your budget compounds the problem and makes things worse. The debt is actually going up; the deficit is up, not down; and we continue to shed good private sector jobs.

Premier, for nine years your failed economic plan has taken Ontario backwards. Why are you doubling down on a plan that makes no sense for families and is compounding the problems we face in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question, Speaker. I know my honourable colleague will want to reflect on the facts, a couple of those being that unemployment is down in Ontario and so is the deficit. He'll also want to give some credence at some point in time to the fact that we continue to create jobs in Ontario. Since the depths of the recession, 319,000 new jobs have been created in Ontario. We've reclaimed all the jobs that we lost, plus 20% more beyond that. We've created some 45% of all the jobs created in Canada since the recession.

Obviously, Speaker, there is still more work to do, and I look forward to working with my honourable colleague

in the days to come to ensure that we can build a still stronger economy that creates still more jobs.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's the reality—I think it's important to have a healthy dose of reality in the debate here, because there's a lot at risk. The province has had its credit rating downgraded. We've shed 300,000 good manufacturing jobs but added on 300,000 government jobs. It's not sustainable. Since the election, we've actually lost full-time jobs in the province of Ontario while other provinces have actually added jobs.

Premier, you claimed that you would bring in an austerity budget, but spending is up, not down; you've added \$23 billion to the debt in this fiscal year alone; and you've done absolutely nothing to trigger private sector job creation. In fact, Speaker, he's making it worse with brand-new taxes on businesses and entrepreneurs.

Premier, if your budget got downgraded by Moody's, if your plan has failed the province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Question, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —for eight or nine years, what's going to be magic about this summer to turn things around? Isn't it time to try a bold, new course to turn our great province around?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Hope springs eternal, Speaker, and the official opposition still will have an opportunity shortly to vote in favour of a strong plan that is found within our budget—still hopeful, Speaker. I'm hopeful nonetheless, and I'll talk about—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to start right off the bat. The yelling for the sake of being loud is not acceptable, and I'm going to start identifying individuals.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, if we just look at the commitments we're making to infrastructure investments over the course of the next three years, that's some \$35 billion. That translates on an average annual basis to about 100,000 jobs.

Let me give you some specifics: When it comes to investments that we're making on highways, on average during the course of the next three years we'll be creating 26,000 jobs every year; for universities and colleges, it's 3,000; just for making spaces for full-day kindergarten, it's 2,000; and in hospitals, Speaker, it's 26,000 new jobs every single year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Premier, the Ontario PCs are going to say no to your plan to increase the debt, to chase jobs out of the province of Ontario.

I am proud, Speaker, to lead the only party in the Legislature that took a consistent, principled stand: pro-jobs, reducing spending, balancing the books in the province of Ontario right from day one.

Premier, I'll say this again: We're voting no because we believe it is time to take a new path in Ontario. A bold new path will make Ontario a leader, the best place in all of Canada to get a good job, to raise a family; the best place in all of Canada to start a small business, to see it grow. That's our plan, Premier. Why won't you shift course, join us and make Ontario the leader again in this great country—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Rousing negativity, Speaker—it's an unusual combination.

I say to my honourable colleague, the first thing that leadership demands of us is, you've got to show up; you've just got to show up. I remain optimistic. There will be more work to be done in the fall session, Speaker, and we will be looking to my honourable colleague in the official opposition as we deal with some difficult issues associated with public sector pay, for example. I extend this invitation publicly to my honourable colleague to give careful consideration as to how we might work together in a better way in the fall, especially when it comes to dealing with public sector pay issues.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier, I'll extend my hand back to the Premier. If you want to join our plan to actually freeze public sector wages across the board, no hesitation, no delay, it will save us two and a half billion dollars. Premier, you're welcome to come join us. We'll even take you, because we think that maybe even you can get religion and understand you can't spend your way to prosperity but understand that we actually have to support the private sector, not punish it; that we have to actually rein in spending in our province.

Speaker, I'm proud to say that we lead here a bold, principled alternative that says we put faith in the private sector for job creation, that there is a better way, that we can reduce the size and cost of government and not say that the government must forever increase and load on more and more debt. We want to see an Ontario that will rise again, that will lead again, that will be the leader in Canada. That's where we stand. If you want to join us, come on over.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague is shooting an ad in here today.

Speaker, I'll tell you where we part company on the approach that they're bringing. They want us to cut corporate taxes today. Over the course of the next three years, that would cost us \$1.5 billion. They want us to cut the business education tax rate. Over the course of three

years, that's \$300 million. They want us to keep in place a racetrack subsidy. Over the course of three years, that's about \$1 billion. When you add those together, we're talking close to \$3 billion in tax benefits or subsidies that would have to come out of health care and education, out of our hospitals and our schools. We can't support that.

Our plan is about curbing our expenditures at the same time that we protect those services that families have got to be able to count on, like their schools and their health care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, it's amazing, Speaker. Every time I ask the Premier about reducing the size and cost of government, about the necessity of balancing the books, he talks about more and more government spending. We're saying that's not the path forward.

We actually need to reduce the size and cost of government. We need to help the private sector succeed, not through expensive government handouts, but by creating the right environment for businesses to succeed, to prosper, to invest: affordable, reliable energy; lower, not higher, taxes; a government that says, "Our role is to get out of the way of business, get behind them and help them create jobs again." Premier, that's the way forward.

After nine years, why are you doubling down on a failed economic plan that has made Ontario a have-not province? Join with the PCs for a better tomorrow, a stronger Ontario, the best place in Canada to get a job.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think it's important to cut through these rhetorical flourishes so I can speak directly to what my honourable colleague is proposing.

We're not going to be making cuts to our hospitals. We are not going to be making cuts to our schools. I want to make that perfectly clear.

Instead, Speaker, we're bringing a balanced approach. We are, in fact, freezing corporate taxes at this point in our history. We're freezing our business education taxes. We're no longer going to provide subsidies for those kinds of things we can't afford at this point in time.

Instead, we'll continue to support our schools and our health care, and we'll reduce our spending in a thoughtful, balanced and progressive way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's the bottom line Speaker: This morning, 600,000 women and men woke up in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario without a job. They're out pounding the pavement today, emailing out their resumés. They saw nothing from this government, in any shape or form, of a new jobs plan to help give them some hope.

We're their hope. We're their hope for change, a plan that says we'll put those people back to work in good, well-paying jobs, middle-class jobs in the province, with our job creation plan.

Premier, at a time that you should have reduced spending and balanced the books, we saw you increase

spending in 14 out of 24 of your ministries. We saw a debt that goes up by \$23 billion.

I can't fix your budget mess, sir, but I can fix the province of Ontario with a bold plan that will take us to the top again. Your plan has failed. Change course. Won't you consider, over the summer, the bold PC ideas to move our province forward, to make us number one? Premier, we hope to see that coming in the fall session.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The ideas aren't bold; they're just old. We've seen them before.

They want to give \$3 billion into subsidies and corporate tax cuts and take that out of our schools and our hospitals. That is not something that we can support.

We think both families and businesses demand balance from us. That's what our budget represents. It eliminates the deficit, it protects our schools and our health care, and it lays a new foundation for jobs and growth.

Speaker, the NDP say that we're doing too much cutting; the Tories say that we're not doing enough. That tells me we've got it right in the middle, which is exactly where we need to be.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Later today, barring any surprises, this House is going to pass three bills. My question is a simple one to the Premier: Was that so hard?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say to my honourable colleague that I think the Bard put it best when he said, "All's well that ends well." I remain hopeful that together with my honourable colleague the leader of the NDP we can do what is necessary to reassure Ontarians that we have a strong plan of action that is in fact doing things the NDP wanted—freezing corporate taxes, creating a new tax category for our highest-income earners—and at the same time protecting our schools, protecting our health care and laying a foundation for new jobs and growth. We can only accomplish those kinds of things on behalf of Ontarians by working together.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: From day one I've been more than clear: This budget left Ontario families falling behind, and I intended to make it better. I'm proud that our team was able to do exactly—exactly—what they said they would do.

My question to the Premier is: Does he now finally recognize that the bluster and the threats don't get results?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Introspection is always a lot of fun, Speaker, but I'll leave that to the pundits. I think what is most important is that we have it within our grasp today, by working together, to take a big step forward on behalf of Ontarians. I think that's our responsibility.

As we look around the global economy and see failing economies, it becomes so important that we find ways to continue to work together to advance the interests of both families and businesses here in Ontario. That kind of thrust is incorporated in our budget. I look very much forward to ensuring its passage not too far from now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, one of the things that the Premier seems to have forgotten over the last couple of days is that I don't work for the Premier of Ontario; I work for the people of Ontario. And I hope that all parties can work together to deliver results for the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I hope that all parties actually can work together to deliver results for people, but I believe, quite frankly, that that's going to require less posturing, less threatening and more work. Is the Premier prepared to do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think it's really important that we stay focused on the interest that Ontario families and businesses have. They have an interest in us finding ways to work together. I think, by and large, we have succeeded in doing that. We recognize that we form a minority government. We recognize that we can't move forward without the support of the opposition from time to time.

I think we've cobbled together a budget that is exactly what the doctor ordered. It's going to have us eliminate the deficit, it's going to protect our schools and our health care, and it's going to lay a new foundation for jobs and growth. In that regard, I think we can together claim some legitimate success achieved, again, on behalf of Ontario families and businesses.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Yesterday, Ontario's Ombudsman made it clear that the complete fiasco at Ornge could have been avoided with proper oversight. Can the Premier explain why he rejected oversight measures when it comes to the privatization of ServiceOntario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Actually, if you take a look at the record and what we've done during the course of the past nine years, we've adopted a number of measures that increase oversight and transparency. I took the opportunity to speak with the Ombudsman before he released his report, and we had a very good discussion about the kind of oversight afforded by—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —in comparison to what exists in other provinces. I've given him assurance that we will take his advice into consideration and give it very careful consideration to see what we might do to ensure

that we bring to bear all the necessary transparency and oversight that are warranted today on behalf of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we've always been very clear over here—New Democrats have always been very clear—that fire sales of Ontario assets will leave us paying more and getting less. We were ready to work with the government to ensure proper oversight and public scrutiny of any deal. Instead, they chose to work with the party that has made it clear that they would privatize this Legislature if they could.

Why is the government so determined to sell off assets?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I think it's important to understand that my honourable colleague, the leader of the NDP, is opposed to public sector pay constraints of any kind, and I think that's irresponsible. She's opposed to us examining any kind of privatization possibilities, and that too, I think, is irresponsible.

We've entered into a phase of our economy that calls upon us to make some important decisions. First of all, we have to establish our priorities; those are our schools and our health care. We look at everything else in a slightly different light, Speaker.

When we look at privatization possibilities—and we've talked about ServiceOntario—we need to do that in a way that gets better value for Ontario taxpayers and, at the same time, improves the quality of service for Ontarians. I'm convinced that's what we need to do, and I'm convinced that working together we can find a way to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What we're in favour of is respectful negotiations and protecting the public interest.

The Premier has to make a choice. We're ready to work with the government to bring forward a positive change that we know that people need. But if the Premier thinks that he can simply act like Stephen Harper and bully us into supporting his omnibus schemes—that the sell-off of public assets that leaves people paying more is a good thing to do—then he hasn't been paying much attention at all, Speaker. Can I hope that at some point he'll start?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say to my honourable colleague that she, from time to time, raises the issue of process, and process is important, Speaker. We will do everything in our power to respect process, but results are important as well. I say to my honourable colleague, if she has a specific proposal to deal with public sector pay constraint in Ontario, I would be very interested in hearing from her in that regard.

If there's anything at all, any line of work, any business we're in, that we really shouldn't be in today at the beginning of the 21st century—so we can better establish schools and health care as our uppermost priorities—then I would be most pleased to hear from my honourable colleague, the leader of the NDP. It's simply not acceptable for her to say, "No pay restraint of any kind, no privatization of any kind whatsoever." That's simply not on today.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also for the Premier. Premier, as a lawyer by trade, one would expect that you've never walked away from an agreement without getting a deal in writing. Every Ontarian out there knows that you don't even buy a car without getting a contract. You walked away from your meeting with the NDP to secure support for a multi-billion-dollar budget without getting as much as a handshake.

How is it that when entrusted with the leadership of the largest province in Canada, you are more negligent in setting the terms and securing a written commitment for support of your budget than a first-time car buyer?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me say that my preference, Speaker, would have been to sit down with the two leaders of the opposition. That would have been my preference.

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that we all can and should draw some lessons from our first session as a minority government. If you stop and think about it, Speaker, for the previous 21 years, we've always had majority governments, and I think we're all learning a little bit along the way. I remain hopeful that we'll use those lessons in a positive way, going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Let me set the Premier straight, Speaker. On November 18, my leader sat down with him, and shortly thereafter I sat down with his finance minister.

You want Ontarians to trust you to lead a province when you couldn't dot the i's and cross the t's on the budget deal. Have you ever heard that the devil is in the details, Premier? Instead of paying attention and doing your job, you created extreme anxiety province-wide over a possible election this summer, using it as a threat to pass the road map to ruin that you call a budget. You then had the gall to try shifting the blame to others. How dare you accuse my party of being absent—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Peter Shurman: —or without leadership when we're the only consistent people in this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While I did say "question," which meant you had to wrap up, I'm hearing heckling from both sides while the question is being put, and it's very difficult to hear. I'll leave it at that for now.

Finish, please, in 10 seconds.

1130

Mr. Peter Shurman: One line: Why would any Ontarian trust you with the budget, much less the province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, there may have been some tangential connection to health care or to education or to the economy in that question, but I fail to see

that, and I don't think it speaks to the interests that Ontarians share. They want us to find a way to take a step forward. I feel that we have it within our grasp today to do that together. My preference, Speaker, is that we do that unanimously, I say to the Conservative Party.

We have a strong budget. It takes the action that we need to take at this point in our history. It takes steps to eliminate the deficit, protect those public services that families have got to be able to count on—our schools and our health care—and lays a new foundation for jobs and growth. It does what we need to do.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. What a difference a weekend makes. Last Friday, the finance minister shouted from the rooftops that NDP amendments to the budget bill would cost the province \$3 billion. This morning on live radio, he said that they won't have an impact on the fiscal plan at all.

My question is a simple one: Does this make the Minister of Finance the boy who cried wolf or David Copperfield for pulling a \$3-billion rabbit out of a hat?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, my hope is that later today this Legislature will pass a budget that gets Ontario back to balance, protects our health care system and our education system, a budget that has taken into account—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will come to order, the member from Durham will come to order and the member from Prince Edward—Hastings will come to order—all three.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It takes into account the changes that have been proposed by members of this Legislature to build a stronger Ontario.

Those votes later this morning are important. I look forward to every member in this House standing up, not sitting down, and taking a position and saying where they stand clearly and unequivocally.

This plan is the right plan for Ontario, and we're going to move forward together as a province to that better future we've spoken of.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Speaker, last week the finance minister huffed and puffed and nearly blew the House down over NDP budget amendments. But now that they've passed, the wind seems to be knocked out of him. Will he finally admit that Liberal accusations and name-calling over the past week were nothing but hot air and political puffery?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ontarians want the budget to pass. They want the investments we're making in jobs. They want better schools and better health care. That's what this government, this budget and this Premier have delivered.

Since the beginning, since that member and I first met last December, we sought the input of all the parties of this House, Mr. Speaker. One of them came forward with

constructive ideas, many of which we've adopted. I look forward, in very short order, to the member opposite standing up and saying what he's going to do on this budget. That's going to be a precious moment.

I also hope—and let me be clear, Mr. Speaker: It has been a difficult week. I hope that member and his House leader can get along better than they seem to be in the House and in committee all of last week.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, in talking to constituents in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, wait times in health care are a priority. I know that it is incredibly important to ensure that Ontarians receive the best care possible in a timely manner.

I know that this government has made wait-time reduction a priority and has achieved great success. Can the minister explain what the government has done to improve wait times for patients in Ontario and the successes we have seen?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, thanks to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for this really important question.

We know that if you measure wait times, you can take the steps necessary to bring them down, and that's exactly what we have done. Just yesterday, the Wait Time Alliance gave Ontario our fifth straight year of straight As in their yearly report. The Wait Time Alliance is not the only organization to recognize Ontario's success; the Canadian Institute for Health Information, CIHI, placed Ontario first in Canada in hip and knee replacements last year, and for the last seven years, the Fraser Institute has recognized Ontario as having the shortest wait times in Canada.

I want to say thank you to Dr. Alan Hudson, whose pioneering leadership got us started. I want to say thank you to the doctors, the nurses, the hospital staff, the administrators—the people of Ontario worked together to get these results. We know there's more to do, and we're determined to do it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Minister. It is great to hear about the successes that Ontario has had in improving access to care for patients, but, Minister, I know that there is still much to do.

ER wait times continue to be problematic. Ontarians are still waiting too long in an ER to receive the care they need. In the most urgent of times, Ontarians need to have the confidence that they will receive the care that they need when they need it.

Minister, would you please tell the House what action the government is continuing to take to address these long waits in our ERs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I agree. More needs to be done to improve our wait times in our emergency departments, so here's what we're doing.

First, we created the health care options website, ontario.ca/healthcareoptions, so Ontarians know of all of

the available options near them so they go to the right place to get the care they need, not right to the emergency department.

We've launched our seniors' care strategy. We're going to ensure that seniors have access to the right care at the right place at the right time. It will help ensure that people get the care they need at home whenever possible, so that they can get out of hospital as soon as they're ready to go home, with the supports they need. I'm very excited about this seniors' care strategy, because it will, in turn, free up hospital beds for people who really do need to be in an acute care hospital.

I'm proud of the work we've done. I want to say thank you to all the people that helped achieve this remarkable success.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Ombudsman told us that the scandal at our air ambulance service could have been avoided if he had the authority to oversee it. The fact is that Health Ministers Smitherman and Caplan as well as Minister Matthews had that authority.

The question that we have is this: As we go into the summer months and as we head towards an election in Kitchener-Waterloo, what people across this province will be asking themselves is, knowing that the Premier and his ministers had the authority to oversee our air ambulance service, why did they not?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm very grateful to the Auditor General for bringing to light some problems at Ornge. I want to say thank you to the Auditor General. He gave us some very good advice, and we are acting on every one of his recommendations.

We have completely new leadership at Ornge, and they are getting results. In terms of oversight, we've got a new performance agreement that gives us strengthened oversight ability. We also have a bill before this Legislature that, unfortunately, is not yet passed. Unfortunately, the opposition has been delaying progress in this House.

The changes at Ornge are having an impact. We now, by mid-July, will have virtually all the spots for pilots filled, and we're working hard to increase the number of paramedics. I'm proud of the progress that has been made.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: For the last number of months, we've heard in the committee hearings that in fact the minister and the government had the authority to intervene. They chose not to.

The question that we have for the minister today is why, over the last number of months, did they waste countless hours here in the Legislature, defending the indefensible? Why did they refuse a select committee so that we could get to the bottom of it? The question the

people of Ontario have for this minister, for the Premier and for this government: Why have they refused that select committee? What are they hiding?

Tell us who was responsible for allowing them to be complicit in the waste of millions of tax dollars and putting patients at risk. Will the Premier tell us that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We've come a long way when it comes to Ornge. We've got a new performance agreement in place. We're appointing a new patient advocate. Ornge will be publicly posting a complaints process. There will be annual public surveys on performance. We're improving significantly the reporting of emergency dispatch information. We're now including cancelled flights, delayed flights and declined air and land ambulance calls. We're creating a quality improvement plan at Ornge, just like we have done in all of our hospitals, because again, we know that if we measure it, we can improve it.

I know that the new board at Ornge is absolutely committed to ensuring that patients who need the care of Ornge get the very highest quality care.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, André Marin, Ontario's Ombudsman, said that the scandal at Ornge might have been prevented if he had been able to investigate Ornge. He made a point that New Democrats have been making for a long time: More independent oversight is a good thing.

Yesterday, Liberal members had the opportunity to add more oversight and accountability to Bill 55, to keep Ontarians from facing more Ornges. But instead of supporting more oversight in their budget bill, Liberal members voted with Conservatives for less oversight. Why did the Liberal government vote against the kind of oversight that could prevent more Ornges?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have put forward a budget that in its entirety will get this province back to balance, will in fact improve education and health care for all Ontarians, and will deliver the kind of progressive reforms that Ontarians want.

We applaud the work of all the various officers of the Legislative Assembly. Whether you're talking about the Auditor General or the Ombudsman, whether you're talking about the Environmental Commissioner, all of them perform a vital public service for all Ontarians. This government always welcomes their oversight, their recommendations, and responds positively, because that is part of good governance. We're proud of the work they do. We commit to continue to work not just with the officers of the Legislature but all members of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I had the opportunity to sit on the finance committee yesterday and watch. I watched Liberal members vote for less oversight. I watched Conservative members vote for less oversight. After the scandal at Ornge, I simply can't fathom why any party would restrict the power of an independent legislative officer like the Auditor General to do their jobs to protect the public of Ontario.

Can the Premier explain why his party joined with the Conservatives to vote for less oversight and the potential creation of more Ornges?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Since assuming office, this government has expanded the powers of the auditor, expanded the powers of the Ombudsman. We have worked with the independent child advocate. We've given new powers to the Integrity Commissioner to oversee expenditures. We have posted expenses online. These are examples of how we've actually increased legislative oversight.

If I could urge one thing to members of the third party: Let's pass Bill 50, the Ornge bill, that would get this thing straightened up. It moves on the recommendations of the Auditor General and moves on the recommendations of our own internal audit. That's what would be effective. I look forward to members voting every time important legislation like this comes up, casting your vote for the budget bill, for Bill 50. That's why we're here: to vote.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Energy. We all know that electricity transmission infrastructure plays a very important role in Ontario's energy system. It's especially clear when we talk about peak usage. My constituents have been asking what the government has been doing proactively to bring more clean and renewable energy online. Under the previous government, our province used to burn cheap coal to keep the lights on, when our transmission system could barely hold the power it needed as a result.

Can the minister share with us the progress this government has made with regard to bringing cleaner, more renewable energy online and the investments that we've made in the transmission system in this province recently?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: On days like the past couple of days and today and, we hear, tomorrow, the question on everybody's mind is a simple one: Will we have enough?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings is warned.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Will we have enough? We know that in 2003, we didn't. In the years before, we didn't, because the party opposite reduced our ability to generate our own power so we could run our businesses and homes. For the past eight, nine years we've worked really hard to bring new generation on. About a quarter

of our generating capacity today we've brought on, and it has been clean. We're getting out of coal. It's clean; it's renewable—clean sources to clean up the air.

Just yesterday we launched the Bruce to Milton line to bring more than 3,000 megawatts of clean, renewable energy to homes all across the province of Ontario. It's a good-news story.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Minister, for that response. I know my constituents will be very pleased to hear what the government is doing to bring more clean energy online. It also increases the capacity to mitigate the blackouts and the brownouts we saw under the previous government. It's an especially important topic of discussion when taking into account the weather we're experiencing today and all this week. It's clear we have a heat wave on us, with 30-plus temperatures being experienced. What my constituents are looking for are assurances that the reliability of our power system can be counted upon, even if demand increases by a large amount.

The minister just told us how the government has increased capacity and reliability. Can the minister now please tell us what energy-conserving efforts our government is making to help ensure that the system remains reliable?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member from Oakville raised a very important point, because we know that in the years leading up to 2003, the party opposite cancelled conservation programs and placed no emphasis on it, ironically at the very time when the supply was going down under their watch.

With increased supply, we've also worked very hard with families and businesses to develop a culture of conservation. Is it working? Already the equivalent has been saved to take half a million homes off the grid. Half a million homes: That's how much has been saved, and how? Through conservation programs to help families and businesses not only conserve but save money; through energy efficiency standards for products—over 50 products already, and we're working on developing more—the Energy Star program and others; and through building code changes which launched on January 1, 2012. They're so enthusiastic about this.

There's more to do. At the end of the day: Save energy, save money, conserve—it's a great message.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, we know, based on your recent responses over the past few weeks, that fixing Waterloo region's broken EMS dispatching system isn't really a priority for you. Last week, you again rejected the region of Waterloo's appeal to create one emergency dispatching facility modelled on the successful regionally operated Niagara EMS dispatch centre, which your ministry approved as a pilot project in 2005. Over the last seven years, the Niagara centre has been a stunning success,

boasting ambulance response times faster than any provincially controlled dispatch service. We know that as part of this project the Liberal government conducted a thorough evaluation of the Niagara system in 2009, which led to its continuation.

1150

A simple question, Minister: Where is the 2009 report on the Niagara dispatch centre, and are you willing to table that in this House today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks to the member opposite. I just want to mention that I had a wonderful conversation with the chief of police from Waterloo region, a very fine gentlemen, who has just finished his term as the chief of the chiefs, the president of the Ontario—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Police association.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —police association, the chiefs of Ontario police. We discussed this issue, and we agreed that we would continue to talk about it.

Of course, an Ontario-wide dispatch system is a very important priority for this government, as is reducing dispatch wait times, Speaker. We know that when people call 911, they need help and they need it as quickly as possible. We are absolutely committed to getting those response times down, because sometimes it is a matter of life and death.

There's work to do, and we're doing that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Minister, an overwhelming majority of municipalities, including Peel, York, Waterloo and, yes, even London, are now in favour of implementing dispatching services similar to Niagara's, but you continue to stand in the way, saying that they must provide proof that a regionally operated system will produce better results. Well, Minister, we have that proof in your evaluation of a successful Niagara system, but you continue to suppress it. In fact, I'm holding in my hand the response to a FOI request filed by municipal paramedics in which you say that you will only provide documents relating to the Niagara report after redacting 25% of its contents.

Minister, it's time to stop hiding this information. So I ask you: Will you do the right thing to save lives in the region of Waterloo and across this province by disclosing the full report today—yes or no?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said earlier, I am absolutely committed to doing what needs to be done to get those dispatch times down. We are very pleased that we're moving forward on a pilot program on simultaneous dispatch so that firefighters will be dispatched at the same time as the ambulance. We know that sometimes the fire trucks can get to the scene more quickly. Firefighters are highly trained in first aid. They, of course, are not trained as paramedics, but they can provide care while waiting for the ambulance. We're committed to working with the municipalities, including the region of Waterloo, to do what's right for the people we are here to serve.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Yesterday, the Wait Time Alliance delivered their report card. Ontario received a F, a failing grade, for moving patients through emergency rooms. This, sadly, is no surprise to Ontarians and no surprise to patients who experience the pain of the long wait in our emergency rooms.

The government has said that they would protect health care and cut ER wait times in the budget bill. Why, Mr. Speaker, do things keep getting worse, not better, in our emergency rooms?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, quite the contrary, and I'm very pleased I have a copy of the Wait Time Alliance report here with me. Ontario has straight As when you look at hip replacements, knee replacements, radiation therapy, cataract surgery and coronary artery bypass. When you look at cancer care, straight As again—all body sites combined: breast, prostate, lung.

Speaker, we do have work to do on ER wait times, although we are making improvements when it comes to wait times for the non-admitted patients. We have work to do to get ER wait times down for admitted patients, but Ontario is the only province that is actually reported in this report as even measuring our emergency department wait times. We are number one in the country, and we are going to continue to do even better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mr. Speaker, the first step in solving a problem is that you have to admit you have a problem. The wait times that my constituents experience at Health Sciences North in Sudbury are so bad that the top physicians have gone to the media. They are concerned about patient safety.

Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that 10% of the patients in Sudbury leave the emergency room before they even see a physician because they can't wait any more? That puts them at risk. They wait over 20 hours; that's 12 hours more than the ministry's target. It is clear that something is going drastically wrong—terribly wrong, I will tell you.

The government has said that it would protect health care in the budget. What's happening in our emergency rooms?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the members of this House might also be interested to know, on our emergency department non-admitted patients: CTAS level 1—A; CTAS level 2—A; CTAS level 3—A; CTAS level 4—A; CTAS level 5—A.

Speaker, we know that for admitted patients, we need to do better. That is why we are making the investments we are in our seniors' care strategy. We want to get people home as soon as they can go home. If someone is ready to go home, let's make sure we have the supports so they can go home to free up that bed for someone who needs to be admitted to the hospital.

That is what our action plan is all about, Speaker. We're very optimistic about the future. We've made great strides, and we're going to do even better.

ELDER ABUSE

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. This day recognizes the issue of and brings awareness to the sad reality of elder abuse. The day is also meant to empower seniors to protect themselves against abuse. It's about taking action ourselves to report abuse when we see it happening and about doing everything possible to prevent it. Many constituents in my riding are very concerned about their loved ones, and I'm often asked about how we can work together to stop elder abuse in all its forms.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please share with us measures the government has taken to combat elder abuse in this province?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to thank the member for shining a light on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Our government understands how important it is to stop elder abuse in our communities. That's why we were the first government to provide annual operating funds to the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, or ONPEA, as we know them. ONPEA does a great job of helping Ontario seniors who have been abused or who are at risk of being abused. Our support helps ONPEA do what it does best: assist seniors, train front-line staff and raise awareness about elder abuse.

In 2010, we launched a series of fact sheets on financial planning and abuse. These fact sheets were developed in partnership with the federal government and other provinces and territories. As well, Ontario offers an annual smart consumer calendar available to all of our MPPs that offers valuable information on how to avoid popular scams.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Minister, for your response.

Many of the seniors in my riding have expressed concerns to me about abuse in retirement homes. I know that we've all read and heard of the disturbing stories in the media about elder abuse in retirement homes. Residents in some homes have been neglected or emotionally, physically, verbally and financially abused, sometimes for years. I think we can all agree that our loved ones deserve better. Seniors in Ontario made and continue to make our communities better places to live. They deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell the House how our new Retirement Homes Act will protect seniors living in retirement homes from being abused? Who can residents or their families call for help? And how will retirement home operators be held accountable for their actions?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I thank again the member for the question. In June 2010, our government passed the new Retirement Homes Act. For the first time in Ontario,

seniors living in retirement homes have strong protections under provincial law. The act includes several safeguards against abuse and neglect. Last year, we introduced immediate measures to protect residents against harm until the act came into full force. Harm or risk of harm can now be reported seven days a week, and any reported abuse or neglect will be investigated immediately. On July 1, retirement home operators will have a duty to protect residents against abuse by anyone or neglect by a staff member. At the end of the day, this legislation is about protecting our parents, our grandparents and the people who built this province.

1200

RONDEAU PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, the families that live in Rondeau park in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex have been told that they'll have to find a new home in 2017. These are regular, hard-working Ontarians who expected to be able to keep their homes and continue supporting their community while doing so. Instead, they're being threatened with the loss of their unique heritage community because the government has decided the park needs to be returned to nature, with little evidence to back up their claim.

We need to work together. Minister, will you listen to the families of Rondeau who have spent generations as stewards of this beautiful park and allow them to purchase their property, or at least agree to extend their lease agreements?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to thank the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex for his advocacy on this issue. On several occasions, the member and I have spoken about this issue, and he has certainly shared his concerns, as he is now in the House.

I do know that the member also knows that we have consulted with cottagers, environmental groups and other affected groups on a recent proposal to change the cottage lease conditions at Rondeau Provincial Park. There's certainly very keen interest in this matter from all sides, and I want the member to know that we are taking that into consideration.

It's certainly a complex issue; it's not quite as straightforward as the member has put it. That's why we have initiated environmental and economic studies to help inform our decisions for Rondeau in the future. At this time, a further review of the Rondeau leases is not anticipated until these studies are completed. But thanks so much for the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Minister, I'm solution-oriented, and I believe that there is an everybody-wins solution: Rondeau park wins, Ontario Parks wins, Chatham-Kent municipality wins, leaseholders win, the environment wins and the economy can win. Families will be able to reinvest in their homes with confidence of tenure behind them. The revenues will fund crucial yet delayed tourism

and stewardship projects, like a \$2.5-million bayside visitor centre with no net cost to the taxpayers, while all along creating jobs.

Interjection: They'll never support that.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I know—something foreign to this government.

Instead of destroying the local ecosystem with an extensive teardown, the park gets to keep its proud stewards while giving up less than 1% of its area. Minister, my question is this: I ask you, will you endorse this crucial project for Rondeau families?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, I thank the member for the question. Certainly we want to be able to consider the cultural and environmental issues that are involved in this as well. I do appreciate the fact that, indeed, the member has approached me on a number of occasions. May I say there are many members on all sides of the House who are very interested in this challenging issue—and it is indeed a challenging one.

Again, I will continue to work closely with the member. I appreciate any opportunity we may have for some solutions that are coming forward. We do have the environmental and economic studies that are under way right now. That has been agreed to. There was a proposal put forward for a change in the lease conditions, and there was a very strong reaction to that. We want to make sure we move forward with the best possible advice, which is why we're going to wait and see till those studies are completed.

But again, I appreciate the question. I look forward to working with the member in the future, and with all members of the House in this regard. Thanks so much.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. There has been widespread support for Bill 98, which would call for a ban on charging predatory fees to those immigrants and migrant workers who send money overseas to their loved ones. The Toronto Star, in fact, has urged all parties to support this bill. Yet the minister has only said she would monitor the bill.

When will the minister stand up for Ontarians who want to transfer money abroad and stop their money from being unfairly siphoned off by companies that charge predatory fees?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: This is an important issue, and I want to thank the member for bringing this forward. All Ontarians with loved ones abroad know how great of an issue remittance fees are. This issue impacts a great number of people in the province and is one many of us, including myself, can relate to.

Once introduced, the government will carefully review the bill to determine if it falls under our provincial

jurisdiction. The minister will conduct an analysis of the proposals put forward with this bill to determine any jurisdictional or constitutional concerns. Currently, neither the federal government nor—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The member is warned.

Minister.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This issue is a very complex issue and we continue, as I say, to monitor this bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The bill has already been introduced, so there is no need to wait and see. The bill is there for the minister to review. It is available.

Now, the minister has gone missing when it comes to unfair fees on remittances. Members of ACORN, a group that's leading on this issue, have tried a number of times to meet with the minister regarding remittance fees. In fact, for a month, the minister has not responded to a phone call or even an email.

When will the minister finally agree to meet with ACORN and let Ontarians know: Does she stand behind Bill 98 and hard-working families who wish to send their money abroad to loved ones overseas or not?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, the member is in fact correct. This issue is before the Legislature, and the Ministry of Consumer Services is looking at the legislation, and we will conduct an analysis of the proposal put forward.

This is an issue that we are all cognizant of and this is an issue which the federal government has much of the oversight for, issues relating to international money transfers and exchanges, and it is a complex issue. We will continue to monitor the bill that has been presented by the member.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. I'm so proud to be a member of this government, which has consistently prioritized the economic independence of women. We know that tough economic times have a disproportionately large impact on women, and I know that the McGuinty government has worked hard to change this. But, Speaker, despite the growing demand for labour in the skilled trades and information technology sectors, women continue to face barriers when trying to access employment in those sectors. We know that with the right skills training, unemployed or low-income women are more likely to succeed in careers in skilled trades or information technology.

Speaker, through you to the minister, what is this government doing to help low-income women get the skills they need to secure jobs in skilled trades and information technology?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: If you want to feel hopeful about the world, you only need to go and talk to the

women who are participating in the women in skilled trades and information technology training program. This program is offered across the province through a variety of partners.

I had the opportunity this week to go to MicroSkills and had a chance to speak to some of the women who have benefitted from our government's investment of nearly \$24 million to train women in skilled trades and information technology, which is also called WIST. Those investments we've made since 2003. In so doing, we've supported more than 2,220 women. When they graduate from this program, 80% of the women are employed. I think it demonstrates how government can work in partnership with those in the community to support women who want to support their families, to build a new life and open up opportunity. That's what it's all about.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Citizenship on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, a point of privilege: We do have today with us a delegation from China led by Mr. Zhou Huachen, who is the vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the Jilin Provincial People's Congress. I'd like to ask everyone to join me in welcoming you and your delegation here on behalf of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First, it's not a point of privilege. Second, it's not a point of order, because we've got an agreement and we're going to stick to it. So if you're standing to say you want to introduce somebody, stay seated.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just would like to correct my record to say that our ministry, the consumer services ministry, is currently reviewing and analyzing the legislation which is before the House.

DEFERRED VOTES

STRONG ACTION FOR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR UNE ACTION ÉNERGIQUE POUR L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 55, Loi

visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1211 to 1216.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would the members take their seats, please.

Mr. Milloy has moved third reading of Bill 55.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Balkisson, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Craitor, Kim
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Heiena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil

Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Orzietti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sorbara, Greg
Sousa, Charles
Takhair, Harinder S.
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those against the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Pattapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 52; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The House will now retire and recess for 30 minutes. The bells will be rung for five minutes before the House resumes.

The House recessed from 1220 to 1250.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His

Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 114, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 /
Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1252 to 1257.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Duncan moves that leave be given to introduce a bill entitled An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007.

All those in favour of the motion, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad

Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwintor, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinity, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul

Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sorbara, Greg
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takharr, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

Nays

Armott, Ted
Bailey, Robert

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank

O'Toole, John
Pettapiece, Randy

Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Rod

Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick

Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 68; the nays are 34.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

First reading agreed to.

TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS

Mr. Duncan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 /
Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? I heard a no.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1301 to 1306.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members take their seats, please.

Mr. Duncan moves second reading of Bill 114, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007.

All those in favour of the motion, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad

Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwintor, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinity, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul

Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sorbara, Greg
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takharr, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the bill, please rise and be recognized one at a time by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Yurek, Jeff
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	
Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 68; the nays are 34.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS

Mr. Duncan moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 114, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 /
Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1310 to 1311.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Duncan has moved third reading of Bill 114, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007.

Those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Millroy, John
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza

Balkissoon, Bas	Forster, Cindy	Murray, Glen R.
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Bentley, Christopher	Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Orazzetti, David
Best, Margaret	Horwath, Andrea	Piruzza, Teresa
Bisson, Gilles	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadi, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Campbell, Sarah	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Chan, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Chiarelli, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	Mantha, Michael	Sousa, Charles
Coteau, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Crack, Grant	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Damerla, Dipika	Mauro, Bill	Taylor, Monique
Delaney, Bob	McGuinty, Dalton	Vanthof, John
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
DiNovo, Cheri	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Miller, Paul	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Yurek, Jeff
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	
Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 68; the nays are 34.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My wish for you is a safe and healthy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Off with their heads!

This House now stands adjourned until Monday, September 10. Enjoy.

The House adjourned at 1315.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craiton, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeline (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
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David Zimmer
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Przedziecki

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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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la justice**

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
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Gilles Bisson, Donna H. Cansfield
Steve Clark, Garfield Dunlop
Jeff Leal, Lisa MacLeod
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Michael Coteau, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
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